

# “Lullaby”: The Story of a *Niggun*<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In the winter of 1943, a song was performed in the Terezín Ghetto. It was an art song with a Hebrew text, yet its melody had also featured as a folk song, a pop tune, and a wordless vocalization; later, it would become a religious hymn. This article seeks to uncover the story of this tune: how it emerged, how it acquired a text, how it got to Terezín, how it was treated there, and what meanings can be drawn from its manifestations.

The piece in question is Gideon Klein’s “Lullaby.” Our inquiry started as we noted an anomaly, a disagreement between recordings. At a key point in the composition, we realized that two performers sing different pitches, which is not unusual in many song traditions, but is entirely atypical of a notated art song.

**Example 1a:** Excerpt from Isabelle Ganz’s recording of Gideon Klein’s “Lullaby”<sup>2</sup>

**Example 1b:** Excerpt from Wolfgang Holzmair’s recording of Gideon Klein’s “Lullaby.”<sup>3</sup>

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

We wondered, how could this difference be explained? Was one version mistaken? If so, which one, and why did the mistake occur? Does it have any significance? While attempting to answer these questions, we found ourselves embarking on a scholarly pilgrimage, which took us from a shtetl-like community within a Russian imperial city, where the tune originated as a Hasidic *niggun*, to Anglo-Palestine in the 1930s and 40s, where it was transformed, and from there further to the European diaspora in the 1940s, to countries such as England and Poland, and then to Nazi Germany, where the version on which Klein’s song was based, was created; from there we crossed the Atlantic to New York, where a version of the original *niggun* was first notated, and then back to Terezín. While some of these stations along the song’s way are known to scholars and to audiences, our close investigation of contextual settings, newly discovered archival materials, and oral history interviews have enabled us to answer our original question, and further to shed light on the cultural history of our song, uncovering its changing musical and verbal texts. This article’s conclusion establishes not only which version is correct, but suggests why the mistake was made, and what meanings both the right and wrong versions convey. In the process we raise questions about the relationship between texts and contexts, words and music, the multiplicity of versions, and notions of

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<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Ganz, *Composers of the Holocaust*, Leonarda Productions, B00006BNAO, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Holzmair, *Spiritual Resistance: Music from Theresienstadt*, Bridge Records, B0029LJ9G4, 2009.

genre: from classical music to liturgy, from folk song to commercial hit. The story of this lullaby—“Shechav Beni”<sup>4</sup> (“שכב בני”)—can be read as a microcosm of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish history, which reaches both an end point and a new beginning in the camps.

## I. Terezín, February 1943

The period from around December 1942 to March 1943 was described by Jewish musicians in the concentration camp of Terezín as “the Middle Ages.”<sup>5</sup> In the “beginning,” as one undated record by members of the music section in Terezín explained with scriptural allusions, “there was the word.” In other words, music was sung *a cappella*. But the opening of the camp café, the repair of the old piano, and the arrival of several new musicians at Terezín in the autumn of 1942, all led to a flurry of musical creation. Although the musicians could not have known it at the time, the same months saw also a brief respite in the terror regime that dominated the ghetto. The death deportations, which had been going on since the summer of 1942, had ceased for a period of about seven months, after Himmler had signed an order for their suspension on 2 February 1943. Following international pressure, Terezín was being prepared around that time to feature as a showcase for a Red Cross visit. Musical creation was to be a part of the charade. A new normalization was therefore beginning to take place, although disease, epidemics, and malnutrition were rife. And on 6 February 1943, the composer Gideon Klein completed a new composition: the lullaby, a fragment of which is included above, in Example 1.

There is no record of any event in Terezín at which the song was performed, yet its careful dynamics, accents, and phrasing indications all suggest that it was intended for a concert. The pianist Edith Steiner-Kraus, who was with Klein in Terezín, and died in September 2013 aged 100, explained in 2012 (in a telephone interview conducted through her daughter) that the lullaby, which she clearly recalled, was most probably sung in informal gatherings, but she could not remember an occasion when it was played.<sup>6</sup> In recent years—its score preserved, having been passed to a friend as Klein was preparing for his deportation to Auschwitz in October 1944—this lullaby has re-emerged as a staple of memorial concerts.<sup>7</sup> The title, as written on the score, was “Wiegenlied,” meaning “cradle song” or “lullaby.” The opening Hebrew words describe a mother, sitting by a crying baby and soothing him, telling him to lie down and rest. The arresting high notes aside, the text repeats the soft syllables typical of many lullabies—*lailah, lailah*, meaning “night, night.” But the music tells a more complex story. While the opening of the song rises upward, Klein’s accompaniment undercuts it, both in direction and harmony. The tune rises an octave, whereas the opening accompaniment is darkly chromatic. We shall return to this point towards the end of our study.

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<sup>4</sup> Our transliteration follows Modern Hebrew pronunciation; however, transliterated quotes are not standardized.

<sup>5</sup> “A Short History of the Music of Terezín,” undated, written by the music section of the “Freizeitgestaltung,” edited by its members Hans Krása, Gideon Klein, Dr. Josef Stross, and Pavel Libenský, translated from the German by Alisa Shek for the History, Music and Memory Seminar, *Beit Theresienstadt*, July 2006, <http://www.slideshare.net/bterezin/a-short-history-of-music-in-terezin>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Telephone conversations Naomi Tadmor held with Dr. Hava Bloedy-Vinner in August 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Klein was sent to Auschwitz and from there to the camp of Fürstengrube, and was last reported alive in January 1945. He either died in the camp or on a forced death march following the retreating German forces. His musical works composed in Terezín were given to a fellow prisoner, Irma Semecka, who was to pass them to Klein’s sister, should she survive.

(Wiegeliad) וְיָשָׁב בְּנֵי (Gideon Klein)

Sopran  
Piano

3/4

gad - cha go - she - vet um - cha scho - me - ret  
Sch' chaw b' - ni sch' chaw bim - ni - cha, al na tw

2) mi - kol ra  
ke ma - ra al mi - ga - mit mi - ga - tel ka - ja - an ha -

tan ha - ru - ach ha - nu - ach no - se - vet ekam sch' chaw b' - ni sch' chaw bim - ni

cha mi - ma ni - ma schan. Lay - lah lay - la lay - la zel ja

Example 2: Gideon Klein's manuscript of "Wiegeliad," ("שׁוּב בְּנֵי," "Shechav Beni"), Terezín, 1943, pp. 1-2.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Used with permission of the Jewish Museum in Prague, Inventory # GK020.

uf ma-ker m-od a-ssur as-sur a-ssur hit-a-zel ma-  
char za-rieh laa-wood ma-char je-zo a-ba la-cha-roch, b-be-lem b-  
to-lem je-lech ha-av ach a-tek b-mi ha-ka-tom mi-ma mi-ma  
seham

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Example 2 (cont.): Gideon Klein's manuscript of "Wiegenlied," ("שכב בני," "Shechav Beni").

On close inspection, the words, too, appear to tell a more complex story than is revealed by first impression. Any protest in Terezín was censored. Both the Germans and the Jewish authorities kept close watch. Singing could be a coded way of speaking to the Germans, to one another, and perhaps to oneself. To paraphrase the words of the Terezín musician Rafael Schächter regarding the momentous performances of the Verdi *Requiem* in Terezín, “it was possible to sing to the Germans what it was impossible to say to them.”<sup>9</sup> As we later suggest, this lullaby, too, was adapted to convey coded messages. First, however, let us turn to its origins and to the world from which it emerged.

## II. Nikolayev, Ukraine 1910-24

Thus was Jewish Nikolayev, a torn prayer shawl (*tallit*), patches of diasporas, loathed by its wearers not less, if not more, than by its onlookers. The humble tallit was guarded by fears: the mysterious fear of the ancestors ... and the fear of pogrom.<sup>10</sup>

These words may reflect the sentiment of their author, Emmanuel Harussi (who had composed the words of the lullaby set to music by Klein), while he drafted his autobiographical notes in Israel in 1963, as we discovered in our archival research; yet they hardly do justice to the vibrancy and complexity of the Jewish community of Nikolayev (or Mykolaev) under Tsarist Russian rule. Since the early decades of the nineteenth century, thousands of Jews had migrated to the town. The re-building of the Black Sea fleet, following the Crimean War (1853–1856), had led to enhanced industrialization, which offered Russian and Ukrainian Jews (whose habitation, education, employment, and civil rights were legally restricted) new opportunities for making a living. By the time that Emmanuel Yinnon Novogrebelski, later known as Emmanuel Harussi, was born in Nikolayev, the Jewish community numbered more than 20,000.<sup>11</sup> Those included thin strata of educated professionals and wealthy merchants, and a medley of small tradesmen and artisans, workers and laborers, some perched on the brink of the then-rising Russian middle class, and many in various gradations of poverty. Within this diverse population, two communities stood out, and their fortunes are inextricably linked in the course of our history. First, there was the small group of the “Lovers of Zion” (חובבי ציון, *Hovevei Tzion*), later the followers of the utopian thinker, Theodor Herzl. Those cultivated the revival of the Hebrew language and yearned for the recreation of a Jewish homeland in the land of Israel.<sup>12</sup> Second, there were the followers of the Rabbi of Lubavitch, the Chabad Hasidim. Although Harussi described them as “a small and fanatical [group],”<sup>13</sup> he borrowed from them the tune of our lullaby.

The intricacy of Nikolayev’s Jewish worlds is further reflected in the coincidental birth of two of the historical actors in our story at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Emmanuel Yinnon, born in

<sup>9</sup> “על רקוויאם של” quoted by the survivor Marianka May, in Yon Feder, “On the Defiant Requiem”, 1 June 2012, *Ynet*, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4236909,00.html>, last accessed 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Israel National Library – Archives, Emmanuel Harussi’s archive, Arc. 4<sup>o</sup> 1817, file 121, בניקולייב, *Ish Yehudi Be-Nikolayev* [A Jewish Man in Nikolayev], draft autobiography, fols. 1–6, and quotation on fol. 6. כזאת היתה ניקולאייב היהודית, טלית. קרועה, שכולה טלאים של גלויות, המאוסה על לובשיה לא פחות ואולי אף יותר מאשר על רואיה. על הטלית שמרו הפחדים: הפחד המסתורי מפני האבות ... והפחד מפני הפוגרום. The draft numbers 25 pages; prepared for “Eduyot,” and published under the title “Ish Ivri Be-Nikolayev” [A Hebrew Man in Nikolayev], *Amot* B\3 (1964), 70–81; אמות ב חוברת ג תשכ”ד. In Hebrew, translated by Naomi Tadmor.

<sup>11</sup> Harussi estimated that ten percent of the city’s population were Jews, but underestimated their number as 10,000: בילדותי *A Jewish Man*, fol. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Harussi, *A Jewish Man*, fols. 5–6.

<sup>13</sup> Harussi, *A Jewish Man*, fol. 5.

1903, was the son of a Zionist family, as his rare Hebrew name, Yinnon, indicates;<sup>14</sup> his mother, however, had been born and brought up in the Chabad community in town. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, born in Nikolayev in 1902, was the great-great-grandson of the third leader of the Chabad Hasidim; from the 1940s, he joined his father-in-law in the world leadership of Chabad in New York, where the tune that became the lullaby was first notated as a *niggun* in 1948. Around the same time that Harussi and Schneerson were born, two other important characters in our history were already in their teens: Shalom Charitonov and his brother Ahron. Closely tied to the Chabad leadership in town, and schooled from early infancy in religious learning, they proceeded to scrape a living as ritual slaughterers in Nikolayev. When time permitted, they cultivated their great love: the performance and composition of devotional music, including the tune borrowed several decades later by both Klein and Harussi.

As Harussi recognized, music was a strong thread that held together the tatty social fabric of Nikolayev Jewry. In this respect, the influence of Chabad was paramount, particularly their wordless songs, known as *niggunim* (singular: נִגּוּן, *niggun*), which expressed devotional and mystical sentiments. As Harussi recalled in his draft biographical notes: “They sang tunes (*niggunim*) with no words, pensive *niggunim*, full of emotion and intricate contorted desires.”<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel’s mother—following her Chabad tradition, as her son recalled—“always sang, as she went about her work in the house, and while walking in the street.” Young Emmanuel loved her singing, but was annoyed when she adapted tunes. It was her habit, as he recalled, to “arrange every melody, even the most famous, to suit her taste.”<sup>16</sup> Later, when Emmanuel came to arrange his own songs, and put words to melodies, he did exactly the same. At least two of his early and most famous songs were based on Hasidic tunes, to which he added lyrics, including his most famous creation, which came to be known as: “Shechav Beni.”

**Example 3:** The Earliest Known Sound Recording of our *Niggun*, New York, 1960s<sup>17</sup>

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

As Harussi grew up immersed in Hebrew literature and Hasidic music, both indispensable for our analysis of his work, some biographical details are in order. As a boy, Harussi went to a Zionist Hebrew-speaking school, where he learned fluent Hebrew, which he also spoke at home.<sup>18</sup> His father read to him Karaite Hebrew verse, “so that his ear would pick the right Hebrew sound.” One of the communities in Nikolayev’s patchwork was Karaite, and the Zionists admired their manner of diction (as opposed to the

<sup>14</sup> Emmanuel Harussi recorded in his biographical notes that when he was born, a first son after two daughters, his father was so overjoyed that he declared that he would name the boy with a Hebrew name that “would strike the world with amazement” (יכה את העולם בתדהמה) and eventually agreed to name him Emmanuel Yinnon: *A Jewish Man*, fol. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *A Jewish Man*, fol. 8, a drafted and crossed out page (רבי רגש ונפתולי יצרים), (ניגונים בלי מלים, ניגונים “מהורהרים”).

<sup>16</sup> *A Jewish Man*, fol. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Israel National Library – Sound Archive, Y/06198, item 17, 1:00:25–1:02:14, singing Shabetai Ben Zvi Althoise, originally from Nikolayev. The recording was made by Zalmanoff, probably in New York in the 1960s, and was subsequently given by him to the Sound Archive. The collection contains a number of tapes: see also Y/06202, Pt. I, item 12, 36:19–38:08. See and compare Y/38683/1, repeated in part in CD 5526(2): a recording of Shalom Brochstat made by Ya’akov Mazor in Kefar Chabad, 1 December 1966, also in (2004) האוניברסיטה העברית, המרכז לחקר המוסיקה היהודית, המרכז לחקר המוסיקה היהודית (ירושלים): המרכז לחקר המוסיקה היהודית, *יעקב מזור, הניגון החסידי בפי החסידים* (ירושלים: המרכז לחקר המוסיקה היהודית, 2004), CD 2, item 12. In 1963, the *piyyut* was also recorded and issued by Chabad, YC/00329-REL *Niggunei Chabad* no. 6 (5725 נחזה) recorded in Jerusalem (1963?), item 3, Zalman Bronstein singing.

<sup>18</sup> Harussi, *A Hebrew Man*, 74; *A Jewish Man*, fol. 11.

widespread Ashkenazi diction, considered less pure).<sup>19</sup> In addition, he learned biblical literature, interpretation, and Mishnah and Talmud, thereby acquiring a rich knowledge of the sources. Before long, young Harussi became known as a poet *wunderkind*.<sup>20</sup> His poems were sent to contemporary periodicals (although, traumatically, he was excluded from one competition and therefore failed to meet the most famous poet, Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik, whom he greatly admired). Emmanuel’s father, a minor clerk in an industrial firm, did all he could to encourage his son’s education, including moving the family to Odessa to enable Harussi to continue his studies in medical school; but revolution and war intervened. Ukraine was torn between fighting armies. Fierce pogroms erupted anew. By the early 1920s, Harussi, then a student and Zionist activist, foraged across Odessa to bring bread to his starving parents.<sup>21</sup> When he was arrested and sentenced for deportation to Siberia, migration to Palestine was presented as an option, part of an international exchange of British-Mandate and Russian prisoners. Thus, in 1924, he bid farewell to his family and embarked to Palestine. He never became as famous as Bialik, as his father had dreamt. By 1929, however, he made a name for himself by composing Hebrew words to Charitonov music from Nikolayev: the melody that Gideon Klein later arranged in Terezín. Having said that, we shall have occasion to remind ourselves several times that in this case we have no decisive original. This is both because of the mutative nature of the *niggunim*, and, more prosaically, because the *niggun* as such was not notated or recorded until after 1948, when it was transcribed in the Chabad headquarters in New York City.

### III. *Eretz Israel* 1929–31 and “Shechav Beni”

By the early twentieth century, songs and dances had become an essential part of the *Eretz Israel* culture (namely, the Jewish culture developing in *Eretz Israel*, Palestine under the British Mandate.) Often called “folk songs,” these were mostly composed by trained (and sometimes highly trained) musicians. Although the repertoire was not assembled in an orderly fashion, these songs are considered to belong to distinct “eras,” with some “eras” being more significant than others. Harussi arrived around the end of what Nathan Shaḥar has termed “the third era” of *Eretz Israel* songs (dated following the major *‘aliyot*, or immigration waves).<sup>22</sup> While very few of the songs from this fourth era ever became part of a broader canon, “Shechav Beni” managed not only to penetrate the canon but to become a great hit. Several factors may have contributed to its success. Generally, around the time that the song was written, lullabies were in vogue. During the third era, just before “Shechav Beni” was composed, the number of lullabies in the *Eretz Israel* musical arena had increased threefold.<sup>23</sup> Many of the songs from around that time were moreover set specifically in the Jezra’el valley: the site of pioneering settlement, where important social and ideological experiments were taking place. By locating “Shechav Beni” there, Harussi’s lullaby at once captured two important contemporary themes.

<sup>19</sup> Harussi, *A Hebrew Man*, 74; *A Jewish Man*, fol. 11; see also Emmanuel Harussi, למה זה שמי הרוסי [Why Is My Name Harussi?], draft manuscript, Israel National Library – Archives, Emmanuel Harussi’s archive, Arc 4<sup>o</sup> 1817 02 92, fols. 1–7, especially 1–3.

<sup>20</sup> First songs written around the age of seven, according to Emmanuel Harussi’s Conversation with Dan Almagor (1974?) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJeJ0S7G44>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Harussi’s Conversation with Dan Almagor, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJeJ0S7G44>.

<sup>22</sup> (2006 מודן, תל אביב: מודן, נתן שחר, שיר עלה נא, Nathan Shaḥar, *Shir Ale Na* [Arise, Song] (Tel Aviv: Modan, 2006), 103: between the first era and the third, 62.57 percent of the available repertoire of *Eretz Israel* songs had been composed. The fourth era, when Harussi published *Shechav Beni*, saw the creation of 4.7 percent only of the available repertoire.

<sup>23</sup> Shaḥar, *Shir Ale Na*, 122.

Like other lullabies composed around that time, “Shechav Beni” also focused on current affairs. It was often the case that the lullabies of that period—as Shaḥar explains—were employed as launch pads for other issues: “putting the baby to sleep was interwoven with the history of *Eretz Israel* and solutions for the problems of the Jewish people.”<sup>24</sup> Another literary tradition, also followed in Harussi’s lullaby, was to describe the child while invoking a sense of parental absence. The first lullaby composed by Harussi, “תשרי סבא” (“*Tishrei Sabba*”), highlighted economic distress in Jerusalem following the 1927 earthquake, depicting an orphan whose father had died mining stones and whose mother went to work as a laundress, leaving the baby “all alone in the world.”<sup>25</sup> “Shechav Beni” starts similarly invoking the absence of the father, and ends with both parents being away. Finally, like other contemporary lullabies, which tended to have recurring soft syllables such as *ay-lil-lu* and *numah-num*, “Shechav Beni” included the repeated syllables *lailah, lailah*, and continual use of the verb *numah* (i.e., “sleep” in a single male imperative form, addressed to the child). However, what no doubt contributed most strongly to the lullaby’s success was its beautiful tune.

Harussi’s borrowing of Hasidic musical materials, such as the Nikolayev tune, was not a new practice. According to Ya’akov Mazor, sixty-four *Eretz Israel* songs, listed in early song-books from around that time were in fact borrowed by the pioneers from Hasidic sources, including most famously “Havah Nagilah.”<sup>26</sup> “Shechav Beni”—as Mazor has noted—was only one of at least seventeen known Hasidic *niggunim* for which words had been added.<sup>27</sup> We may find it poignant, considering today’s ongoing friction between the *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) communities in Israel and broader segments of that society; yet there was a shared understanding among many of the early pioneers that an ideal Israel could come about by fusing the social, if not socialist, energies of pioneer Zionism and the mystical power of the Hasidic tradition. Thus, putting pioneering texts to Chabad melodies can be seen as a concrete materialization of a yearning for Jewish wholeness.

Harussi’s words were rhythmically versed. Arresting repetition, combined with dramatic developments, unfolded in three distinct sections. The first focused on the figure of the mother, sitting by a bitterly crying baby, requesting him to sleep. As opposed to the comforting presence of the mother, a menacing world “outside” is invoked, where the jackal wails and the wind blows. The night “shadow” is said to “fly very quickly,” an allusion to the learned interpretation (חז"ל ב"ר, צ"ו ב) כצל מינו על הארץ ... כצל של עוף בשעה שהוא עף ... כצל עובר (our days are as a shadow on the earth, as a shadow of a bird in flight ... a passing shadow”); and a direct reference to Psalm 144:4: “Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow,”<sup>28</sup> as well as the Yom Kippur liturgy where the same imagery is employed. Yet the grim message is checked by the optimistic emphasis on “tomorrow,” when the father and son will join together in the pioneering work in *Eretz Israel*. As the father’s work is described, his

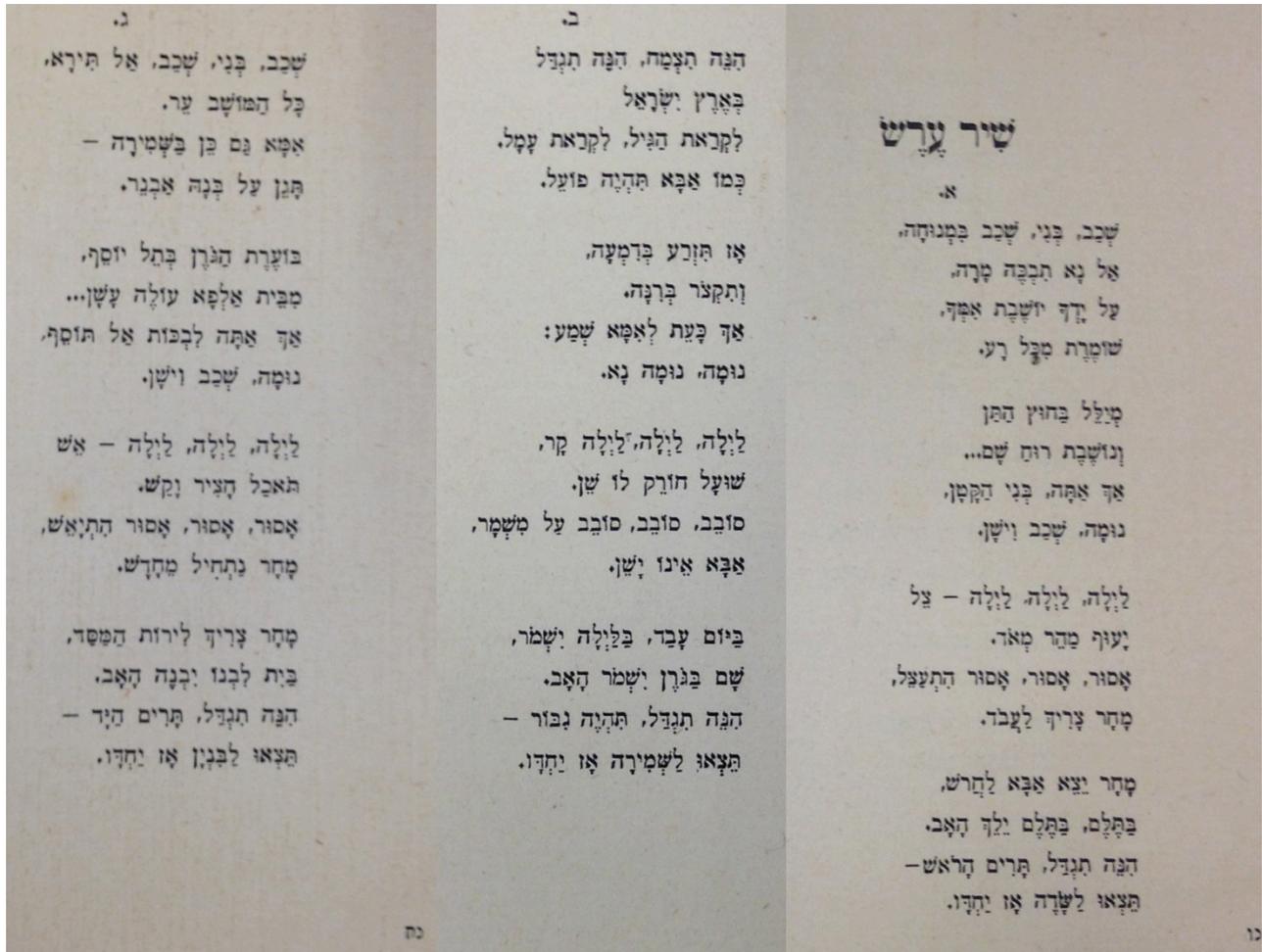
<sup>24</sup> Shaḥar, *Shir Ale Na*, 122.

<sup>25</sup> Israeli National Library – Archives, ARC. 4<sup>0</sup> 1817 02 1, גלמוד הוא בחלד, “תשרי סבא”: The composition of the song following the earthquake of 1927 is described in Harussi’s Conversation with Dan Almagor, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJeJ0S7G44>.

<sup>26</sup> Eight additional songs were adapted by composers as themes for variation pieces. While several known texted Hasidic songs were simply absorbed into the *Eretz Israel* canon together with their devotional words, at least forty more were accepted with abbreviations. A great number of *Eretz Israel* songs, moreover, remained embedded in the traditional scriptural sources, not unlike the Hasidic songs, while at the same time, Hasidic *niggunim* continued to feature in the *Eretz Israel* repertoire in their traditional quintessential form, as singing and dance tunes with no words: see: “מן הניגון החסידי אל הזמר הישראלי,” יעקב מזור, Ya’akov Mazor, “Min Ha-niggun Ha-hasidi El Ha-zemer Ha-yisra’eli” [“From the Hasidic *Niggun* to the Israeli Song], *Katedra*, 115 (2004/5, 95–128, especially 103, 112–14.

<sup>27</sup> Mazor, “From the Hasidic *Niggun*,” 113.

<sup>28</sup> Quoting the English Standard Version (ESV); see also תהלים צ, Psalm 90.



Example 4: The Words of “Shechav Beni” as Published by Harussi, 1930/31<sup>29</sup>

current absence is further intimated. The second section opens with an expression of hope that the child will grow up and join his father as a laborer in *Eretz Israel*. It now becomes apparent that the father, having worked all day, is spending the night on guard, circling the isolated village. Previous references to outside dangers are elaborated: not only is the jackal howling, but a fox ominously grinds its teeth. By the third section, the child is once more soothed into slumber although the entire village is described as being awake. The mother, too, is now said to be on guard, defending her son, whose name is mentioned at this point: *Avner* (Abner), as the loyal commander of King David’s warriors.<sup>30</sup> The newly harvested crop is said to be on fire: flames are rising from the threshing barn of the pioneering cooperative village, Kibbutz Tel Yosseph, while smoke towers from the neighboring Kibbutz, Beit Alpha. Yet the repeated stanza *lailah, lailah* strongly expresses hope: tomorrow the father will lay foundations for a new house. The son, when he grows, will join his father in the building work. The words “one mustn’t, one mustn’t, one mustn’t be

<sup>29</sup> From, Israel National Library – Archives, Emanuel Harussi’s Archive, Arc 4<sup>0</sup> 18171 3/48: (תל אביב: עמנואל הרוסי, שירים ופזמונות (תל אביב: אהנו, תרצ”א), Emmanuel Harussi, *Shirim U-fizmonot* [Songs] (Tel Aviv: Anḥnu, 1930/31, published with the permission of the Israel National Library – Archives. See also, for example, the webpage of the song in the Israeli song website, <http://www.zemer.co.il/song.asp?id=254>, last accessed January 2016; or Uri Heitner’s Weekly Radio Blog], 8 August 2011: <http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=272685&blogcode=12672820>, last accessed 6 January 2016; or Dan Almagor’s presentation, above, n. 19.

<sup>30</sup> 2 Samuel 2–3.

lazy” (or “it’s not allowed, not allowed, not allowed to be lazy”), “tomorrow it is necessary to go to work,” are repeated in the first stanza. “One mustn’t, one mustn’t, one mustn’t despair, tomorrow we shall start anew,” confirms the last. In years to come, these lines would be remembered in *Eretz Israel* as resonant expressions of fortitude and hope in the face of calamity. Each verse is saturated with moving sentiments of maternal and paternal protection.

These song’s words were linked not only to the history of *Eretz Israel* at that time but to Harussi’s biography, which plays a role in our understanding of the song’s context and the significance of any later abbreviation and subversion. By 1929, Harussi had settled in Tel Aviv and started working for a newspaper, his first office job after years of manual work as a *ḥalutz*, a pioneer Jewish laborer. In 1929, he was expecting the birth of a child. The same year saw a wave of violent clashes between Arabs and Jews in British Mandate Palestine (*ha-me’ora’ot*, or “The Events,” as they were later known). Jewish families were slaughtered in Hebron, and the remaining Jews of the town were forced to leave; Kibbutz Hulda was destroyed, and in Jewish villages of the Jezra’el valley barns and fields were being burned down. Around the third week of August 1929, the “Events” had reached their peak, and the birth of Harussi’s child was imminent. One narrative suggested that the death of a friend in a violent clash and the composition of the lullaby took place “on the very same day” that Harussi’s son was born.<sup>31</sup> This was probably unlikely: Harussi (as his son Avner later explained) was on guard duty with a unit in Tel Aviv when news reached him of his son’s birth, and by that time the friend (whose name was Naḥum) had died.<sup>32</sup> Still, the strong contextual setting, and the identification between the lyrics’ hero and Harussi’s son, Avner, evidently struck a chord.

In 1930, “Shechav Beni” was first launched in a stage performance in Tel Aviv, sung in the repertory theatre “Ha matate” (“The Broom”) by the Odessa-trained singer and actress, Niora Schein, accompanied by Moshe Wilenski on the piano (the composer who arranged “Shechav Beni” and other songs written by Harussi for “Ha-matate”). No recording of that performance is known, which means that in this case, too, we have no conclusive original version. However, in 1960, Schein re-enacted her performance in an historical concert, which strove to represent select songs as they were first composed, arranged, and popularized. Note the simple yet highly sophisticated accompaniment.

**Example 5:** Niora Schein, 1960, Re-enactment of her 1930 Performance of “Shechav Beni” in “Ha-matate”<sup>33</sup>

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

We have so far examined the text and its development; let us turn now to the lullaby’s borrowed melody. All known versions have the same ABCB formal design and all are in triple time (Mazor describes it as a “Hasidic Waltz”). Furthermore, they all begin with a rising minor triad, and whether it goes up higher (as in Klein’s version, for example, or in the 1948 Hasidic notation), or remains on the 5th, it falls back down to the 3rd, which happens twice. Any notion of an original tune used by Harussi must

<sup>31</sup> Dan Almagor and Rivkah Micha’eli, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6P5F2MwurA>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.zemer.co.il/song.asp?id=254>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Niora Schein, in *מצעד פזמוני הישוב – מיה היו זמנים*, *Hayo Hayu Zemanim – Mitz’ad Pizmonei Ha-yishuv* [Once Upon a Time, the Greatest Hits of the “Yishuv”], recorded 15 May 1960, reproduced in <http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=254>, last accessed January 2016.

therefore be extracted from versions of the lullaby, compared to the 1948 Chabad notation, and also understood as one of possibly several variants in circulation in Nikolayev around the same time, and which were adapted, or even misheard, by interlocutors.

However problematic it is to express in words the meaning of musical gesture, the formal shape of our song could be described as an arrangement of the passions, whereby the A section reaches for something and falls back (Example 6);<sup>34</sup> the B section sensuously weaves a circle, sweetly rising up to the octave in its first half and falling back to the bottom of the range in the second half (Example 7).

**Example 6a:** Shechav Beni, opening

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

**Example 6b:** Shechav Beni: B section

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

Middles are often strange and wonderful places in musical creations, where secrets, confessions, amorous encounters, funeral marches, and, above all, conspicuous shows of expressivity can be found.<sup>35</sup> The C section, on the words *Lailah, lailah*, lives up to this tradition. In the context of the song, which has just sunk to its lowest note, the gesture seems as powerful and intriguing as it is unmotivated. What caused the composer to reach up to the top of the range for multiple repetitions of the high note, and then swoop down and up two notes to reach it again, and to do this twice, interrupted by a hint of the character of the B section?

**Example 6c:** Shechav Beni: C section

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

Whatever the answer may be, the middle of this song projects uncanny confidence. Likewise, in its way, the C section, by repeating itself, creates tension which is treated differently in diverse variants of the melody. While the *Eretz Israel* and later Israeli versions, in virtually all the many recordings and notations, repeat B identically, drastically pulling back the intensity, the Hasidic version as notated in 1948 and several other later versions have a variant beginning with the octave, with a more dramatic and harsher transition between C and B.

**Example 6d:** Shechav Beni, contrasting B sections

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

These elements taken together produce a miniature masterpiece of grace, nuance, and unexpected power, which brings to mind Harussi’s comment about “contorted desires” typifying the original Hasidic tunes.

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<sup>34</sup> This and the following piano examples are played by Mike Beckerman.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this, see Michael Beckerman, “The Strange Landscapes of Middles,” in Jane F. Fulcher, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163–81.



As can be seen from the figure produced here, the notation was clearly prepared by an amateur. The piece is peculiarly notated in common time, with an odd combination of triplets and dotted rhythms, which, if played accurately, would give the piece an unintended modernist hue. Even the F# in the key signature is an octave lower than usual. The popular Jerusalem lullaby was listed in the same collection. The six additional songs included landmark compositions such as a song by the poet Bialik and the highly popular “Anu Banu Artzah” (“אנו באנו ארצה”). At long last, Harussi’s name appeared in print alongside his childhood hero.

#### IV. London 1933

When the musical scene of *Eretz Israel* came into contact with developing broadcast media in the early 1930s, “Shechav Beni” achieved yet greater prominence. In 1933, the Zionist Habonim movement in London was trying to set up an “*Eretz Israel* Evening,” to encourage audiences to consider migration to Israel (*aliyah*).<sup>41</sup> The program was to include photos of the Holy Land with contemporary songs in the background. Unfortunately, as the producers soon learned, no recordings of the top contemporary favorites were to be found. They therefore decided to initiate new recordings that were to be sung by *Eretz Israel* students then studying in England. They suggested the idea to the record company HMV, and the secretary of the *Eretz Israel* Student Union in London, the Law student Joseph Spindle, was then invited by HMV to select candidates with fine singing voices for trial recordings. As it happened, Spindle himself was identified as the most proficient singer. He was given the task of selecting ten contemporary songs, which he presented to Percy Kahn, the well-known pianist and former accompanist of Enrico Caruso, who was to direct the recording for HMV. When Kahn heard Spindle, he became so enthusiastic that he decided not only to endorse the project but to appoint himself as the pianist, and to accompany Spindle. It was no doubt he who also arranged the music.<sup>42</sup> The final selection for recording included seven songs. The first 12” disc featured “Shechav Beni” on side one.

When we play this recording, we still hear a remarkably assured and dramatic performance, hardly sounding over eighty years old. Spindle’s double-reedy baritone is clear and strong; the arrangement hovers between that of a popular song and a lied. A rather florid opening is replaced with a matter-of-fact statement of the first part, but there is a dramatic slowing in the second half of the B section, which prepares nicely for C, where the keyboard plays lovely parallelisms on the turn figure. The return of B reinforces it with the emphasis on the word *aba* (father), and the end of the phrase is done sweetly.

**Example 8:** Joseph Spindle’s Recording of “Shechav Beni.”<sup>43</sup>

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

The commercial success of this recording was considerable. Spindle, who initially gave up his royalties for the Zionist cause, was soon issued a new contract, with five percent profit. His fine voice was

<sup>41</sup> This, as the bulk of this paragraph, is based mainly on Eliyahu Hakohen, *Joseph Spindle's Five Records*, [http://nostalheb.brinkster.net/ivrit/album\\_details.asp?id=68](http://nostalheb.brinkster.net/ivrit/album_details.asp?id=68), last accessed 2012 and copied, no longer online.

<sup>42</sup> In the Israel National Library – Sound Archive, TAK/012 record details, he is listed as not only the arranger but as the composer.

<sup>43</sup> Israel National Library – Sound Archive, CD/07495, TAK/0120, see also <http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=254>, last accessed January 2016.

“heard from every gramophone in the land,” to quote one commentary.<sup>44</sup> The first recording soon sold out in Tel Aviv; the music spread, as the commentary explains, “throughout the Jewish world.” Some of the songs reached the liturgy. “Ve’ulai,” for example, recorded in the next batch, was soon played in synagogues and performed by cantors. To be sure, not all were pleased. Two composers complained that Spindle distorted their tunes. Harussi (who we may remember borrowed his tune wholesale) later referred to the lax notions of copyright as “complete lawlessness” (*hefkeirut gemurah*).<sup>45</sup> However, this recording retained its popularity. When the British Mandate broadcast service opened in Palestine in 1936, the London recording of “Shechav Beni” featured prominently in the few hours devoted to Hebrew programs. By the 1940s, listeners requested Spindle’s well-known favorites.

When Jewish educationalists and musicians got together in Berlin, Hamburg, and Leipzig in 1934 and 1935 to assemble new Hebrew song-books for schools, youth-movements, and home singing, it was evidently clear to them that “Shechav Beni” was to be included in the repertoire. The song appeared, as we discovered, in two important Jewish-German collections; yet, once again, events were taking over, which played a fundamental role in the ways in which the song was understood in different quarters. From March 1933, a systematic policy started in Germany for the synchronization of government and party rule (*Gleichschaltung*), and the removal of ideological and political opponents of the National Socialist party. German Jews were struggling to comprehend their position in a rapidly changing world. In this historical context, “Shechav Beni” was beginning to sound different. In time, some of these new echoes would figure in Gideon Klein’s arrangement, which takes us to our next section on the fortunes of the song in Germany under Nazism.

## V. Berlin – Hamburg – Leipzig 1934–5

If two of the historical actors in our story were born in Nikolayev a year apart, the two versions of “Shechav Beni” published in Nazi Germany were compiled in different places at the same time. *שירי ארץ ישראל* (*Shirei Eretz Israel*), prepared by Jakob Schoenberg in Berlin on behalf of the federations of the Zionist youth movements, Maccabi and Hechalutz, bore a Hebrew date: the month of Nissan, 5795 (ניסן, תרצ"ה); while *הבה נשירה*: *Hawa Naschira: Auf! Lasst uns singen!*, which, as we discovered, was the version that Klein used, was edited in Hamburg and Leipzig by Joseph Jacobsen and Erwin Jospe, signed April 1935.<sup>46</sup>

These two 1935 versions manifest a new phase in the appropriation of “Shechav Beni.” The Spindle–Kahn creation had already taken liberties with Harussi’s work. The distinctive non-grammatical yet rhythmical and poetic formations: *אסור התעצל* (*assur hit’atzel*) in the third stanza and *אסור התייאש* (*assur hitya’esh*) in the penultimate stanza, for example, which frame the first and last sections of Harussi’s wording, were changed in favor of the grammatical yet ordinary *אסור להתייאש* (*assur lhitya’esh*) and *אסור להתעצל* (*assur lhit’atzel*). Although we do not know how exactly the putative original version sounded, it is almost certain that the music, too, continued to evolve. Such appropriation was common. Indeed Harussi, while complaining of the disregard paid to his copyright (as noted above), had never himself acknowledged the musical authorship of his townsman, Charitonov, and perhaps did not even know about it. As late as the 1970s, the tune was presented in Israel as a “folk tune, perhaps of a Jewish folk song,”

<sup>44</sup> Hakohen, *Five Records*.

<sup>45</sup> Harussi’s Conversation with Dan Almagor, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJeJ0S7G44>.

<sup>46</sup> Special thanks are due to Dr. Gila Flam of the Israel National Sound Archive, who assisted us in our search.

rather than ascribed to its creator.<sup>47</sup> In a similar manner, both 1935 German compilations stripped “Shechav Beni” of any known authorship. Our lullaby was presented in both collections as one of several unclaimed folk songs, recorded from oral transmission. In both cases, the words were adapted, radically abbreviated, and simplified (although in each case, as we shall see, the simplification was somewhat different). Finally, in both cases, the music was also slightly—though differently—changed.

**שָׁכַב בְּנִי**  
(Wiegenlied)

*Tranquillo*

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**Example 9:** The Two German Versions: *Auf! Lasst uns singen* to the left, and *Shirei Eretz Israel* to the right.

For example, instead of stopping at the 5th in the opening section, both Schoenberg’s and Jacobsen–Jospe’s versions reach up to the octave before coming down to the 5th; the conclusion of each phrase in A is approached by stepwise motion, instead of resting on the 3rd. The second B is not an exact repetition, but the first pitch goes up a step. Perhaps these were attempts to recapture lost aspects of the Hasidic

<sup>47</sup> Dan Almagor and Rivkah Micha’eli, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6P5F2MwurA>, (מנגינה עממית, מנגינה כנראה של שיר (עם יהודי) last accessed January 2016. In another interview, Harussi attributed the music of *Ha-matale* to his collaboration with the composer Moshe Wilenski: “Officially, the composer was Wilenski; he would sit by the piano and put to music what we [Harussi and Wilenski] sang,” Harussi’s Conversation with Dan Almagor, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJeJ0S7G44>. In the same interview, Harussi commented on the known Hasidic tune borrowed by him for the 1927 Jerusalem hit – “I really don’t know how it came to me, the tune just emerged.”

*niggun*, whose 1948 notation includes a similar opening gesture. The differences between these two 1935 editions suggest that there may have been several versions of the *niggun* circulating around the same time, and possibly known to the Jewish-German arrangers.<sup>48</sup> For example Jacobson–Jospe’s notation starts on the 4th below, and contains other small alterations. All in all, the 1935 versions bear a greater resemblance than the *Eretz Israel* lullaby to Hasidic versions of the unrecorded Charitonov original, first notated in 1948, and which became the basis of a Yom Kippur hymn. By 1943, these elements were also highlighted in Klein’s arrangement.

As to the words, the differences between the two 1935 compilations may be ascribed to their different responses to the Nazi threat. Reading the preface of the commissioned collection by the scholar and musician Jakob Schoenberg (born 1900, and increasingly struggling by 1935, for Jewish musicians could no longer be employed in state-supported cultural institutions<sup>49</sup>), one would find it hard to discern any recognition on his part of the dire nature of the contemporary circumstances. This collection addresses a committed and knowledgeable audience, with strong Zionist leanings and religious learning. Although the Hebrew lyrics are phonetically transliterated (according to German spelling conventions), no doubt to increase dissemination, none but ardent Zionists and traditionalists would have been able to read the proud preface, written entirely in rich Hebrew. This collection can be described as preaching to the converted, responding to the changing times with communal affiliation and inward-looking nationalism (manifested not least in active Zionism), yet what appears in retrospect as a striking misapprehension of the current threats, not mentioned in the positive introduction.

The second 1935 collection, *Auf! Lasst uns Singen!*, which is critical for our analysis, took a radically different approach, and manifests myopia of a different kind, for it advocated fusing Jewish life with the German *Zeitgeist*. This booklet, which later must have found its way to Terezín, was published on the occasion of what was believed to have been the eighth centenary of the birth of the great rabbi and philosopher, Maimonides.<sup>50</sup> Its aim was to strengthen Jews during a time of persecution, following the example of Maimonides, who wished to accomplish the same task in his own time. The intent was also to embrace Maimonides’ message that it was permissible for Jews in Germany to share German culture: just as Maimonides had ruled that Jews could sing in the hegemonic language, Arabic, so the editors of this 1935 collection encouraged the integration of German and Jewish music. The publication aimed to demonstrate that Jews were a positive and productive force in the German culture, not a decadent nation, as the Nazi propaganda asserted. Rabbi Zev Walter Gotthold, whose role was to visit contemporary youth gatherings and record songs for this collection, later commented on its approach:

This song book documents the desire of Jews to remain part of a German cultural life. German folk songs, Hebrew dance melodies and religious songs stand cheek by jowl in the collation. The editors wanted to integrate various cultures without excluding a song because of its outward appearance ... with hindsight, this cultural political myopia might be ascribed to an attitude still obsessed with the Weimar spirit ... It must seem strange nowadays that such an educationally-motivated cultural policy should have been considered justifiable after the Nazi

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<sup>48</sup> It appears that there are many variants in circulation. While working on this project Beckerman attended Yom Kippur services in 2012 at Congregation Anshe Shalom in New Rochelle, New York. The cantor, Daniel Schwartz, sang the melody with a variant in the B section. When interviewed after the service, he said he had heard this from an “elderly Hasidic rebbe” in Brooklyn “many years ago,” and had never seen a notation of the piece. When Beckerman asked Mr. Schwartz to sing it, again, he sang with the lowered 6th, but when asked to repeat, he corrected it.

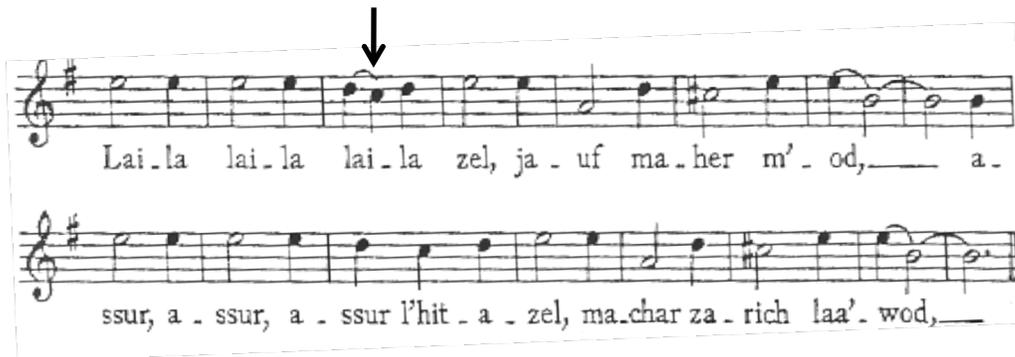
<sup>49</sup> Jakob Schoenberg, <http://www.jtsa.edu/prebuilt/archives/music/schonberg.shtml>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Jakobsen–Jospe, *Auf! Lasst uns singen!*, Introduction, IV; and see Zev Walter Gotthold, *A Jewish Song Book from Hamburg*, translated from the German by Michael Jakobsen, unpublished, Israel National Library – Archive, 2432278 W 240/001.

takeover and the exclusion of Jews from German cultural life. From this point of view, *Hawa Naschira* [*Auf! Lasst uns Singen!*] is an extraordinary historical document. At the same time, we felt that we could justify our pride and determination in this context by viewing our cultural balancing act as a symbolic fusion of Judaism and the German spirit.<sup>51</sup>

Let us look further into the making of this collection, which signaled its importance. *Auf! Lasst uns Singen!* involved the work of a formidable team. The songs were gathered by Gotthold in his field-work, and transcribed and notated according to their oral delivery by the two editors, Joseph Jacobsen and Erwin Jospe.<sup>52</sup> The great music expert, Avrohom Zvi Idelsohn, was consulted, and versions in other song books were compared, especially existing *Maccabi* song books. While some songs were produced in full, several were abbreviated, including “Shechav Beni.” The abbreviations in most likelihood were made by the collators. Two other songs popularized by Spindle appeared in the collection, suggesting a possible influence.

The music was also adapted. The most conspicuous change was the lowered 6th on the words *lailah*, *lailah*, the source of all recorded versions of the tune that use this variant.



Example 10: Lowered 6<sup>th</sup>.

Once again, this raises questions for which we have no answers. Was this an attempt to give the song a more German air, by avoiding the exotic raised 6th? Or did the *niggun*, still un-notated and circulating freely, vacillate between a raised and lowered 6th, depending on when and by whom it was performed, and influencing the collators? Answers are unknown, and likely never will be. In actual performance as a wordless solo, the difference of a half-step may have mattered little, especially if it were shaded a bit up or down, although once it became a notated entity, the difference in character was formidable. In this kind of modal mix, the 6th and the 2nd tend to be the most variable pitches. The lowered 2nd appears in Schoenberg’s 1935 version, and the lowered 6th in Jospe’s. As we shall soon see, although he most likely did not know the tune’s notational history, Klein wrestles with this interval. Finally, the wording of the lullaby was subtly changed, and brought nearer to the German environment. Whereas the *Eretz Israel* song invoked the menacing “outside” of the Jezra’el Valley, where the jackal wailed, the Hamburg–Leipzig version transposes the entire setting to the European landscape of “the forest”: ביער. In doing so, and while

<sup>51</sup> Gotthold, *A Jewish song book from Hamburg*, trans. Michael Jakobsen.

<sup>52</sup> Erwin Jospe, 1907–1983, was the son and grandson of cantors, who proceeded to become a musical director specializing in Jewish music.

reducing the full stanzas, this abbreviated version also removed any reference to *Eretz Israel*, or to the Jezra'el valley, a change that subsequently acquired new meanings in Terezín.

Whereas Schoenberg's 1935 collection thus aimed to fuse the Hasidic and *halutzi* sentiments, and to highlight the "Jewish spirit" resonating through both, this second creation attempted to fuse German and Jewish culture, and to demonstrate that the Jews were a productive and integral part of German lore. Considering his own rootedness in the German musical culture, Gideon Klein's choice of a song from an anthology carrying this message seems in retrospect appropriate, but also tragic. The fact that he proceeded to develop its musical anomalies, deconstruct its harmony, while underscoring and subtly changing its truncated words, invites us to return to our starting point, Terezín. Before doing so, however, a brief detour to New York City is in order.

## V. New York

The first notation of the *niggun*, as already mentioned, was undertaken neither in Ukraine nor in Jerusalem, London, Berlin, or Terezín, but in New York City. As the war drew on, there was a sense in the Chabad community that their musical treasures were endangered, and that an entire culture could be lost. At the same time, at least some tunes had been adapted by Zionists; Chabad may have wanted to demarcate a distance from these renditions, too.

The chief rabbi of Chabad then instructed one of his followers, Rabbi Samuel Zalmanoff, to collate and notate all Chabad tunes and publish them for the use of the community's Hasidim, and for posterity. At the same time, Zalmanoff was ordered to cleanse the tunes from external influences and present them as much as possible in their pure form. This too was a reaction to the war, as well as to current competing forms of Jewish orthodoxy, and Zionist influences. The project, begun in 1944, was published as *Sefer Ha-niggunim* (Book of the Songs, or the Niggunim) in 1948.<sup>53</sup> Both Chabad educational enterprises and publishing were at that time under the charismatic management of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who, as we noted, was born in Nikolayev in 1902, and who escaped to New York in 1941, to be received by his father-in-law, the Chabad chief rabbi, and work with him to enhance Chabad culture. In 1951, Chabad leadership passed to him.

The notations commissioned by Chabad were for the most part professional. They incorporate ornaments and, when appropriate, rhythmic subtleties. Our melody is marked as #66.<sup>54</sup> The differences between it and what we have previously encountered are immediately noticeable. Instead of beginning on the tonic describing an ascending minor triad, and sitting on the 5th, Zalmanoff's rendering invokes (for the first time written or recorded) the minor 6th. Further, as we have noted, it shares with Jacobsen and Jospe's and Schoenberg's versions a move to the octave. Unlike other versions, Zalmanoff's further incorporates a range of ornaments, which at least suggest a somewhat different, and more flexible, style of performance. Finally, the second B of the formal scheme begins differently, on the tonic, as in Jacobsen–Jospe's and Schoenberg's versions. We have as yet no explanation for the fact that no version of the *Eretz Israel* lullaby presents this variant, either in notation or in any recording that we heard, and yet Zalmanoff's version shares it with the two German 1935 publications just discussed.

<sup>53</sup> Tapes recording Zalmanoff's collection are currently stored at the Israel National Library's Sound Archive; see above, n. 16.

<sup>54</sup> ספר הנגונים, בעריכת שמואל זלמנוב (ניו יורק: גיח"ח), *Sefer Ha-niggunim* [Book of the Niggunim], ed. Shmu'el Zalmanoff (New York: גיח"ח, 1948–80), vol. 1, #66. Ellen Koskoff, in her *Music in Lubavitcher Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), also refers to this as a "Hasidic waltz."



Example 11: Zalmanoff’s Transcription of the *Niggun*, 1948.

There are a number of other puzzles, the first concerning the *niggun*’s composition. While Zalmanoff attributed the *niggun* to Shalom Charitonov, Shalom’s grandson, Avraham Charitonov, when interviewed by Beckerman, ascribed the composition to his great uncle, Ahron, who was Shalom’s younger brother. When asked how he knew this, he replied: “We’re the family. Of course we know!” A subsequent interview held by Tadmor in 2015 with the Chabad librarian in New York, Shalom DovBer Levine, who spoke to other members of the Charitonov family, further confirmed the point, adding that the *niggun* also fits Ahron’s “song-oriented” musical style, whereas Shalom’s was more “prayer-oriented.”<sup>55</sup> The attribution of the melody to Ahron Charitonov is shared by the musical ethnographer, Mazor. While doing his field-work on Hasidic music in Israel, he reached the Jerusalem Hasid Ya’akov Kedner, who confirmed that he had heard from Ahron Charitonov’s son that it was his father who had composed the tune. In saying so, that son relied on a set of recordings made by Ahron of all the tunes composed by him. As Kedner had not heard the *niggun* among the recordings, he could not say with full certainty that the melody in question was Ahron’s. Yet in response to Mazor’s question, “How could Zalmanoff make this mistake and attribute the *niggun* to the wrong brother?” Kedner replied that there were “many errors” in Zalmanoff’s anthology, and mentioned additional examples.<sup>56</sup>

A second question concerns the possible use of the *niggun* as a *piyyut*, or a hymn-like prayer, with poetic and devotional words. Scholars and informants in Israel, who studied Hasidic music, insist that the *niggunim* were mostly wordless, and that this tune, in particular, had no words until it acquired the lullaby’s text. Yet Avraham Charitonov, Shalom’s grandson, when interviewed by Beckerman, explained

<sup>55</sup> Naomi Tadmor’s interview with Rabbi Shalom DovBer Levin, New York, April 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Email letter from Ya’akov Mazor to Naomi Tadmor, 29 August 2012.

that the *niggun* had words from the very beginning.<sup>57</sup> The recording by Zalmanoff, heard in Example 3, probably made in New York in 1960s by a Nikolayev singer, also contains an opening from the *piyyut*, and a fragment of another line, but continues with no words.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, Mazor's informant testified that he remembered the *niggun* "from many years ago," but "only the *niggun*," which was "never with the words."<sup>59</sup> Mazor confirmed, on the basis of his interviews, that the *niggun* was first sung as a hymn in Israel in 1960s. Another telephone interview by Shalom DovBer Levine, conducted in Tadmor's presence, in which he spoke to Joel Kahan (the then eighty-five-year-old close follower of the late Admo"r, who acted as חוזהר (*hozer*) and recorded all the rabbi's words and deeds, and had a particular knowledge of *niggunim*), confirmed a slightly different recollection. Kahan also remembered the *niggun* from his childhood, and said that only later did it start to be sung as a hymn, perhaps around the 1960s, yet not in Israel but in New York City.

These are but two of the historical questions about our *niggun* that remain open. With this observation, we are ready to return to our final destination, that capital village of uncertainty, illusion, creativity, and despair: Terezín.

## VI. Terezín 1943–4

In an article written on 20 August 1944, about seven weeks before his transport to Auschwitz, Gideon Klein wrote about musical life Terezín, describing "...a total absence of contacts with the outside world and ... complete isolation from musical productions and performances elsewhere in the world. Certainly after an almost five-year isolation from the musical life of our surroundings, the listener loses almost entirely all critical sense he may have had in the past ..."<sup>60</sup> This unique quality of Terezín is one of many features that make it difficult to discuss the musical works created in the camp. Expressing musical meanings in words, at best a difficult task, is sometimes assisted (or hindered) by suggestions from composers, early performers, or audiences; but in Terezín we encounter silence. In most cases, the composers did not survive, along with the performers and listeners. Still, despite the difficulties, some features typical of the remaining Terezín works can be highlighted. First, several of the pieces composed in Terezín are marked by what may be described as an array of dismal elements, whereby any affect is immediately skewed in a dark and ominous way. A second common feature is the prevalence of musical allusion, achieved either by quoting other compositions, or through clear references to styles and composers outside of the camp, and striking and unusual moments. Third, these works often contain secrets and coded communication. Finally, images of death are frequently present. That Klein combines dismal references with death and allusion is obvious, for example, in his 1944 Trio for strings, which refers to such works as Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade," the Angel of Death in Josef Suk's *Asrael Symphony*, and Janáček's String Quartet No. 2. Is it possible to find such themes in what appears at first glance to be a straightforward setting of "Shechav Beni"?

<sup>57</sup> Beckerman's interview with Avraham Charitonov, 2013; and see also Israel National Library – Sound Archive, Y/3863/1, recording made by Mazor in Kefar Chabad on 1 December 1966 and interview with Shalom Brochstat, and n. 59, below.

<sup>58</sup> Israel National Library – Sound Archive, Y/06198, item 17; Y/06202, item 12, n. 16 above.

<sup>59</sup> Thanks to Tamar Zigman for sending file Y/03683 from the Sound Archive. See also <http://www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=254>, last accessed January 2016.

<sup>60</sup> "A Few Words about Musical Life in Terezín," reprinted in Milan Slavický's *Gideon Klein: A Fragment of Life and Work* (Prague: Helvetica–Tempora, 1996).

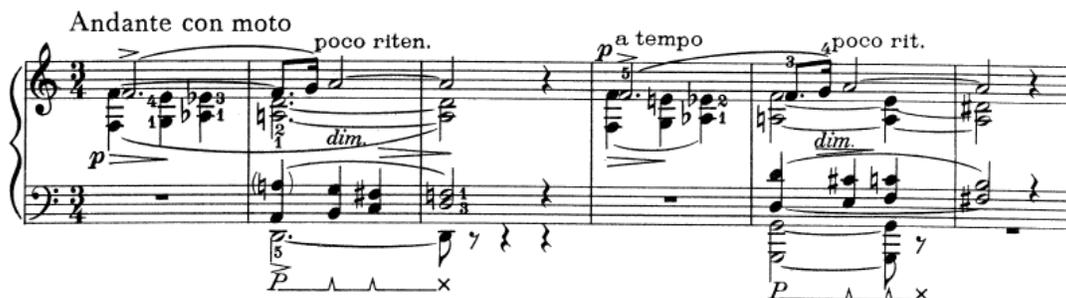
The nature and role of the lullaby in musical traditions, and in Terezín in particular, provides us with a first response. There are long-standing cultural traditions drawing an analogy—or suggesting an association—between sleep and death, and which were known and cultivated in Terezín. The Western musical tradition has at least three great songs featuring Death’s lullaby that Klein knew: Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden*, Mussorgsky’s lullaby from the *Songs and Dances of Death*, and the “Wiegenlied” that concludes Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder*. In Terezín, the genre of the lullaby was employed with particular poignancy. The opera *Brundibar* ends with a lullaby, heartbreakingly envisaging parents, as they imagine their children grown up. Ilse Weber’s exquisite “Wiegala” was popular in the camp, while the interior theme of Krása’s *Tanz* was couched as a lullaby. Terezín was a ghetto with thousands of orphans in need of comfort, as well as bereft parents, all endangered by death. The lullaby must have resonated strongly for all. Yet, at the same time, Klein’s lullaby is destabilizing not least in being set very high. In any lullaby charged with putting an infant to sleep, the high G of the mother’s voice (and the piece is specifically marked for “soprano;” see above, Example 2) would certainly wake the child. What starts as a lullaby resounds like a scream.

The dark tendency is further present throughout Klein’s setting.

**Example 12:** The lullaby’s opening

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

As we hear, the tension is manifested from the very beginning in the descending, chromatic line of the introduction, opposing the rising line of the song itself. The conflict between raised and lowered 6th, E and Eb is present from the beginning. There is, moreover, a strong likelihood that in the opening bars of the accompaniment, Klein is making reference to the sixth of Josef Suk’s Lullabies for piano, entitled “Death, Come Softly,” with the chromatic descent, which accentuates the dark allusion.



**Example 13:** Josef Suk, “Lullaby,” opening.

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

By the middle of the song, the two repetitions of the C section, the phrase with the *lailah, lailah* are treated completely differently.

**Example 14:** Two Settings of *Lailah, Lailah*

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

The first presents an archaic pastoral with a tonic drone and a deft and daring use of the raised 6th in the accompaniment, although it has the lowered 6th in the tune. The second iteration represents a struggle, as Klein has to find a way to integrate the rather alien Eb into the tonal fabric. He does so via an exotic turn of a half diminished bVII-III progression with strong plagal feel approaching Eb.

**Example 15a:** *Lailah*, pastoral.

**Example 15b:** *Lailah*, exotic.

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

While one could regard the exotic as yet another archaic element, and so in some consonance with the idea of the pastoral, it is also here a signal of passion. The rest of the phrase, on *ma-char za-rich laa'wod*, veers in another direction, introducing a tritone on *za-rich* followed by a series of dark suspensions. Perhaps most striking is the stark return to reality, where the accompaniment drops out for the first two beats of the measure, reminding us that after the comfort of the lullaby, *machar*, “tomorrow,” represents just more of the same drudgery.

**Example 16:** *Machar*

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

After repeating the contrast between comfort and darkness, the ending invokes both. It cannot be a coincidence that Klein uses the word *morendo* or “dying out” at the very end. This is a song drenched in ambivalence, where the comforting notes of the lullaby are both heightened and undermined.

**Example 17:** *Morendo*

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

If we turn to the words, we can see that here, too, although Jacobsen–Jospe’s 1935 version was the source, copied by Klein almost verbatim, he slightly intervened with the text in suggestive ways that indicate understanding and intent.

שיר ערש  
שכב בני  
א

Shechav beni, shechav bimenuchah (lie down my son, lie down restfully)  
Al na tivkeh marah (do not cry bitterly)  
Al yadcha yoshevet 'imcha (your mother is sitting next to you)  
Shomeret mikol ra (guarding against any evil)

שכב בני שכב שכב במנוחה  
אל נא תבכה מרה  
על ידך יושבת אמך  
שומרת מכל רע

Meyallel meyallel bachutz ba-ya`ar ha-tan<sup>61</sup> (the jackal wails/wails outside/in the forest)  
Ha-ruach ha-ruach Ve-noshevet ruach sham... (and the wind/the wind is blowing there)  
Ach 'atah livkot al tosef (but you, cry no more)  
Shechav beni shechav bimenuchah (lie down my son lie down restfully)  
Numa shechav vi-yshan numah shan. (sleep, lie down, and slumber/sleep, sleep, slumber)

מילל מילל בחורץ ביער התן  
הרוח הרוח נושבת רוח שם...  
אך אתה בני הקטן  
שכב בני שכב במנוחה  
נומה נומה שן שכב וישן

Layla, layla layla tzel (night, night, night shadow)  
Ya`uf maher me'od (will fly very quickly)  
'Assur, 'assur, 'assur lehit`atzel (you mustn't, mustn't, mustn't be lazy)  
Machar tzarich la`avod (tomorrow it is necessary to work)

לילה לילה לילה צל  
יעוף מהר מאוד  
אסור אסור אסור להתעצל  
מחר צריך לעבוד.

Machar yetze 'aba lacharosh (tomorrow father will go out to plough)  
Be/Ba-telem be/ba-telem yelech ha'av (in (the) farrow, in (the) farrow, father will walk)  
Hine tgedal tarim haroshi (you will grow up and raise your head)  
Aff'ach/ atah beni ha-katan (only you my little son)  
Tetz'u lacharish az yachdav (you will go out ploughing together)  
Numa, numa shan. (sleep, sleep, slumber)

מחר יצא אבא להרוש  
ב-תלם ב-תלם ילך האב  
הנה תגדל תרים הראש  
אף-אך אתה בני הקטן  
תיצאו להריש אז יחדיו נומה נומה שן.

אריית לא בכש ינב בכש  
רע רבכ בשומה לכ  
הרימשב נכ סג אמא-  
רנבא הנב לע נגח

לדגת הנה חמצת הנה  
לארשי זקראב  
למע תארקל, ליגה תארקל  
לעופ היהת אבא ומכ

פסוי לתב נרוגה תרעוב  
...ושע הלוע אפלא תיבמ  
פסות לא תוכבל התא נא  
ושיו בכש המונ

העמדב ערות זא  
הנירב רוצקתו  
עמש אמאל תעכ נא  
אנ המונ המונ

הליל הליל הליל- שא  
שקו ריצח לכאת  
שאייה רוסא, רוסא, רוסא  
שדחמ ליחתנ רחמ

רמ הליל הליל הליק  
נש ול קרוח לעוש  
בבוסרמשמ לע בבוס בבוס  
ושיו וניא אבא

רחמ, דסמה תוריל דירצ  
באה הנבי ונבל תיב  
דיה סירת לדגת הנה-  
וידחי זא וינבל ואצת

רומשי הלילב דבע מויב  
באה רומשי נרוגב מש  
רוביג היהת לדגת הנה-  
וידחי זא הרימשל ואצת

**Key:**

Un-coloured – consistent wording following the 1930/1 original.

Green – original wording, absent from Klein's and Jospe's versions.

Blue – Jospe's 1935 version, changes the original wording, followed by Klein

Yellow – Klein's variations, Terezin, 6/ii/1943 different from Jospe's and the original

**Example 18:** Versions of “Shechav Beni”

<sup>61</sup> Modern transliterations render this as “batar” – an error repeated in oral performances. Klein's original text clearly reads: “hata”.

These are the main adaptations. First, he included the title in both Hebrew and German, writing the Hebrew in a fluent cursive script, and next to it he signed his name. Second, he added accents to assist pronunciation, showing understanding of the Hebrew diction, considerably more detailed than Jacobsen–Jospe’s notation. Third, in one line he corrected *af atah* (Jospe’s error) to *ach a-tah*, which also shows that he or whoever may have helped him understood the Hebrew well. Fourth, he underlined three key syllables, including two in the words: *tiw-ke* and *ma-ra* (cry bitterly), thus highlighting them and heightening the dark meaning. These also happen to be two syllables where the Sepharadi diction is accentuated, suggesting his linguistic awareness. The stress is at any rate on the mother’s voice, which means that at some level it becomes unclear who is crying, the singing mother whose voice is heard, or the baby. The combination of a female singer and the song’s high range further suggest that it might be the mother who is wailing. Fifth, he accurately represented the stress in the second *as-sur* (rather than *a-ssur* as by Jacobsen and Jospe), which once more suggests knowledge of the Hebrew meaning and heightens the word *assur*, meaning “forbidden” or “must not.” Sixth, he repeated the words *m’jalel* and *ruach*, following Jacobsen–Jospe’s score but not the lyrics, where the words appear but once. The first repetition heightens the wailing quality of the song and draws attention to the recurring motif of wailing and crying. *Ruach* in Hebrew means “wind,” but also “soul,” “spirit,” and “ghost.” Whereas in Jacobsen–Jospe’s score *ha-tan* and *ha-ruach* are separated by a comma, Klein removes the comma and adds a mark connecting the two words and their phrases, which emphasizes the effect of howling wind, or wailing, and while adding an accent to assist the pronunciation, changing the transliteration of *ʃ* from the Jacobsen–Jospe’s Germanic *che* to *š*, as in Czech, and rightly adding “h” at the end of “lajlah.” Clearly Klein has given these words a great deal of thought.

Particular significance emerges from Klein’s unique arrangement of both the words and music. The original *Eretz Israel* version sets the sedentary words שכב (*shechav*, lie down) and יושבת (*yoshevet*, sitting) with a repetition of the fifth scale degree, while the Klein setting goes up the octave, thereby inverting the meaning as if the notes were trying to raise the sitting words.

**Example 19:** voice demonstration

**Listen at:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.101>

At the same time, he calls attention to the words יושבת and שוכבת, sitting and lying down. ‘Sitting’ is commonly used in Jewish culture to indicate the post-funeral vigil, a rite performed by near kin, while lying indicates death and burial. The collocation *sch’chaw bim-nu-cha* (lie in rest) in particular acquires a double meaning, as both words “lie” and in “in rest” have in Hebrew strong funereal connotations. The stressed syllable in *sch-chaw* (lie down) is underlined: one of the three key syllables accentuated in this manner in the score.

Beyond that, the words of Harussi’s lullaby highlight the mother and father’s protective roles and the son’s future. In the light of our discussion of Klein’s arrangement just now, many other of Harussi’s formulations seem to acquire new double meanings, also underscored by explicit scriptural allusions. The image of the mother sitting by the child invokes the lonely female figure at the opening of the scroll of Lamentations, who sits, weeps, and finds no consolation: her sons had gone away, or died, and her

enemies triumphed.<sup>62</sup> The reference to the night passing as a shadow in the next line, paraphrasing Psalm 144:4 and the learned interpretations, as already mentioned, sounds ominous in the context of the Terezín ghetto: man’s life is likened to the passing shadow that quickly flies away. This brings to mind sections from the Yom Kippur liturgy, where the same imagery is repeated (and where the *piyyut*, based on the same melody, now features). The words “one mustn’t—one mustn’t—one mustn’t be lazy, tomorrow one must work” acquire an intense new meaning in the context where prisoners were employed in hard labor and where survival could depend on continuing work. The reference to the father’s work in the penultimate line of the first verse reiterates the original wording by Harussi, yet the hopeful message of Harussi’s last line—where the child is imagined as growing up and working with the father—is truncated, as these words are entirely missing from the abbreviated text. Instead, the new last line repeats the words in the imperative, addressing the child and bidding him to lie down still, and rest—שכב במנוחה (*sch'chaw bim-nu-cha*). The funereal message is invoked once more. We may here speculate that the composition of this lullaby is related to the typhoid epidemic, which raged in Terezín at the beginning of 1943 and struck the camp’s children in particular. The following passage from the diary of Gonda Redlich describes this time. The entry reads, “February 6, 1943. *Shabbat*. Typhus. Two children have died. We have reached the danger point I had feared.”<sup>63</sup> This is the very day on which Klein’s lullaby was composed.

Finally, it cannot be a coincidence that two earlier creations by Klein also focus on Psalm 144, cited and paraphrased in the lullaby. One 1933 work entitled *Zalm* (Psalm), and identified by the opening words of Psalm 144: לדוד ברוך (To David, blessed), also focuses on verse 4, which is copied in Klein’s own hand: אדם להבל דמה ימיו כצל עבר (“Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow”). Yet another highlights verses 1–3 of the same Psalm, also copied by Klein.<sup>64</sup> This earlier work carries a more defiant message: ברוך ה' צורי המלמד ידי לקרב אצבעותי למלחמה (“Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle”). In the light of Klein’s engagement with this Psalm, one can only wonder to what extent these earlier yet absent words echo in the composition. Verse 11 of the same Psalm also comes to mind: פדני והצילני, מיד בני נכר, אשר פיהם דבר שוא, וימינם ימין שקר (“rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speaks lies, and whose right hand is the hand of falsehood”).<sup>65</sup> This Psalm, which occupies three of Klein’s known Hebrew creations, clearly meant a great deal to him, and he returned to it in Terezín. One might surmise that it was not only the beautiful Charitonov melody that attracted Klein to Harussi’s lullaby, nor the messages of the words, but the particular allusion to verse 4 of Psalm 144, which he must have recognized, and which appeared so ominous in the context of Terezín: “Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow.”

## VII. Conclusion

It is with a brief recollection of our opening that we conclude. We can now ascertain that from a strictly music-textual point of view, Holzmair’s version of the lullaby, with its lowered 6th, is correct, although we can understand why a singer perhaps familiar with the *Eretz Israel* version and unfamiliar with

<sup>62</sup> Lamentations 1, especially verses 1–7.

<sup>63</sup> *The Terezin Diary of Gonda Redlich*, ed. Saul S. Friedman (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> Klein’s Hebrew seems to have improved between 1933 and 1943, although the hand is evidently similar, in particular, in the formation of the letters ן and ך in the cursive script and the typographical setting of the bilingual title. We are grateful to Nir Cohen, who supplied us with copies of these 1933 works.

<sup>65</sup> Psalm 144, ESV.

other traditions would have raised the 6th, and note that this mistake is reminiscent of the song's mutations throughout its history. It is the lowered darkened 6th, and its descent, we confirm, which is most redolent of the Terezín experience. Klein staged this piece on a deeply symbolic level, as a tonal battle between raised and lowered versions, between E natural and Eb, which can be traced throughout the song. The dissonance and ambivalence are also reflected in the truncated and adapted wording, which transpose the lullaby from *Eretz Israel* to the European-like “forest” and infuse it with funereal messages. Of particular significance is the paraphrased Psalm 144, much studied by Klein, and which was the subject of two other Hebrew works composed by him (a total of three of his five known Hebrew works), including in particular the key verse: “Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow,” which he must have recognized, and which may have played a role in his attraction to this lullaby. Taken together, these elements animate this meticulously composed Terezín lullaby, mixing comfort, bitterness, wailing, sensuous passion, and death.



**Example 19:** Portrait of Gideon Klein by Peter Kien

The history of our song traverses formative chapters in modern Jewish history. Yet it is also significant that the tune created by the Charitonov brothers in Nikolayev has inhabited so many different genres. Starting from a liturgical wordless song, a *niggun*, it was transformed into a folk song, and then became a commercial hit. These transformations were the results of different authorial intents, attempts at word setting, and the historical contexts in which the tune and wording were appropriated and performed. The same tune—and to a degree the same words—thus ended up inhabiting different cultural realms. The transformation continued after Klein's death. Today the tune is probably best known as a *piyyut* or prayer on the evening of Yom Kippur. Yet it was in the unique crucible of Terezín that this evolving substance

reached its most dense formulation. As an art song, the adapted, truncated, and highly crystallized words and music resonate with many meanings, harping on the song’s history, sending coded messages with numerous allusions for us to ponder, long after the *morendo* invoked at the end of Klein’s notation has faded away.

### **Abstract**

This article traces a Hasidic *niggun* from its origins in Ukraine around 1910, to mandate Palestine in the late 20’s, where it acquired a text and became a hit song; to England where it was recorded in 1943; to Nazi Germany in 1935, where it appeared in two different publications; to New York in 1948 when it was transcribed for the first time; and then back to Terezin in 1943 where Gideon Klein created a powerful and highly symbolic art song based on it. Through detailed musical and textual analyses, drawing on archival and oral history research, we illuminate connections between the text and earlier biblical and musical passages to show that the tune and its contexts provide a history of the Jewish people in the 20th century in miniature.