

UNIT 4

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN....  
TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS IN  
JEWISH MUSIC

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סיפורי מוסיקה  
STORIES OF MUSIC



As far back as the 16th-century, Jewish music has adapted and transformed to changing musical interests and tastes. Today is no different. The emergence of technology has accelerated the process of change. This session is the first in a 2-part lesson, and will look at innovations in Jewish music. Over the course of these sessions we will look at music created in summer camps, youth groups, experimental congregations, concert venues and new forms of media, like YouTube, showing the dynamic and evolving developments of Jewish Music.

**Enduring Understandings** (What are the big ideas we want learners to walk away with?):

- Historically, Jewish music has transformed to reflect needs, interests, and identities of Jewish communities.
- The openness and inclusivity of American society have allowed for unprecedented experimentation and diversity in Jewish music.
- The emergence of technology has magnified the diversity and inclusivity of Jewish music composition and performance by providing easy access to a platform for unique personal expressions and participation.
- The intersections of Jewish music and uniquely American musical styles (i.e. bluegrass, Jazz) has led to distinctive Jewish/American style of music.

**Essential Questions** (What are the essential questions that frame this unit? What questions point towards the key issues and ideas that will be taught?):

- What historical/sociological factors have influenced the creation, distribution, and engagement with Jewish music at the beginning of the 21st century?
- What do the emergent trends and innovations of 21st-century Jewish music say about 21st century Jews?
- How has technology changed the creation and distribution of Jewish music in the 21st century?
- What are the boundaries between liturgical and concert music? Have they changed?

**PLEASE NOTE:** In this particular lesson, focused on setting the context for trends and innovations in Jewish music in America today, we would be remiss if we did not mention the expansive influence of Shlomo Carlebach. And yet, given the controversy surrounding Carlebach as a result of accusations against him of sexual impropriety, and the potential pain that a discussion of him may cause your learners, we have not integrated him into the lesson proper. If, however, you want to include Carlebach in your lesson, you will find information about him in the Appendices, and links to his well-known songs here:

Am Yisrael Chai: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkLJgKOHfql>

Ve-Ha'er Einenu : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U4pyUGk6Hw>

Esa Enai: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uk2GLTZyg0>

Lecha Dodi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC19kaPCMYM>

Hashiveinu: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=No4mG5dsjh0>

Od Ishama: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7MCmOBnFx0&list=PL9w\\_OPxsHZzObk7KKheffuQIX9diuUda5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7MCmOBnFx0&list=PL9w_OPxsHZzObk7KKheffuQIX9diuUda5)

## Resources

### 1. Materials

- Computer with either internet connection or on which the video and audio files for the lesson have been downloaded.
- Slide Deck
- Projector and screen for viewing of Slide Deck and video selections.
- Speakers (Bluetooth or wired for amplification of audio and video selections)
- Whiteboard/blackboard or something on which to record responses.
- Writing utensils / Paper
- Hand out of Appendix A: Instructional Resources

### 2. Resources

### 3. Instructional notes

Throughout these lessons, you will find suggested texts in discussion outlines. Texts for the instructor are not meant to be “prescriptive” ie. spoken word for word, they are provided simply as a discussion guideline. Please use your own words.

A. Some Principles of Adult Learning to consider (based on “What We Know About Adult Jewish Learning”, Diane Tickton Schuster and Lisa D. Grant):

- the motivation for participation often has more to do with connecting with / having an experience with friends that the subject matter.
- intrinsic motivation
- want to use their learning to deepen their understanding and seek connection of their life experiences to the content
- thrive in a ‘democratic atmosphere’ (discussion, experiential learning, collaborative inquiry)
- educated / sophisticated in many aspects of life, not so much in their Judaism. “life to Torah and then back to life again” (Rosenzweig)

B. This lesson, as well as those that follow, rely heavily on the following conceptual framework as a way to discuss and “define” Jewish music.

- **Sonic:** utilizes elements like scales, rhythms, and ornamentation that are generally considered to “sound Jewish” but not necessarily specific tunes, etc.

Leonard Bernstein used cantillation motifs in symphonic works; jazz musicians

might vamp on a Sephardic folk song; klezmer musicians record traditional freylakhs or Hasidic melodies.

- **Meaning:** a musical piece has some kind of Jewish frame of reference but doesn't necessarily use traditional tunes or scales, etc.

Anything that uses a Jewish text, is sung in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino could fit here.

For example: Max Helfman's oratorio "The New Haggadah" is based on a poem about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Or, it could be something totally abstract, like an instrumental piece the composer feels reflects a Jewish concept or a personal identity.

- **Context:** "Jewish music is music created by Jews."

This category is broad and not as easily defined. Essentially, we refer here to music by Jews or music in Jewish social/religious contexts.

For instance, songs by (Jewish composers) Debbie Friedman, Craig Taubman, Rick Recht, Beth Schaefer, are derived from long standing Jewish values, but do not always directly use a Jewish text. Nevertheless, both their origin and their use, over time, in Jewish camp and synagogue settings has cemented their place as Jewish songs.

Questions rising out of this frame of reference include:

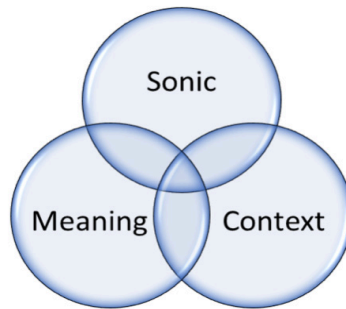
Does any music a Jew writes inevitably reflect some aspect of his or her Jewish identity even if there is no specific Jewish content? i.e. Berlin's "God Bless America", Bob Dylan, or most of the Tin Pan Alley and Broadway composers.

Can "non-Jewish" music played in Jewish contexts be Jewish music? i.e. Max Bruch

Finally, it is important to emphasize that a lot of music can fit into multiple categories. This can serve as a reminder to students that music is not the

“universal language” it’s often framed as, but rather, that musical “meaning” is contextual and subjective.

(See the following Venn diagram, based on work by Milken Archive Curator, Jeff Janeczko)



## Color Codes Used in the Lesson

This color is used to indicate suggested talking points for the instructor. Feel free to use the text as it is written in the lesson, or to paraphrase as you desire.

 These are questions to be asked of the students.

 Texts highlighted like this are points of information and/or suggestions for the instructor in teaching this lesson.

**THE LESSON**

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN...  
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JEWISH MUSIC


## The Lesson

## Slide 1

1. Introduction:  
Begin with a niggun or song to welcome everyone to the class.
2. Invite the participants to introduce themselves and say a brief word about themselves (ie. why they are taking this class?).

### Set induction: The Great Debate

## Slide 2

 The past 60 years have seen a dramatic shift in every aspect of Jewish music, from its composition to its production to its presentation. There has been a dramatic shift in the locus of “authority” (ie. who controls the composition, production and presentation) both within synagogues and in the larger Jewish community.

The purpose of the debate which opens this lesson is to get the participants thinking about several of the essential questions listed above, using synagogue services as an example.

How have historical/sociological factors changed over the past 60 years? And how have those factors influenced the creation and presentation of Jewish music in synagogues? How is the Jewish community different today than it was 60 years ago? What role has technology played in the creation and distribution of Jewish music?

Finally, this “debate” is not meant to suggest “better and worse” but rather ‘different’ and reflective of different needs, interests and contexts.

3. Divide the class into two parts.
  - A. Explain In this lesson we are going to look at the forces that have influenced the direction and creation of Jewish music over the past 60 years. We’ll begin by participating in a debate focused on synagogue music, in particular, that will exemplify some of the currents and will engage us in some of the issues that have defined the evolution of contemporary Jewish music.
  - B. Give each group 10 minutes to meet and form their points/



counterpoints for the debate.

☰ Preparation points for the debate can be found in Appendix A.

C. Debate

- ❓ Comments, thoughts, and reflections?
- ❓ What are the strengths of these different modes of synagogue music?
- ❓ What are their challenges?
- ❓ Which do you prefer? Why and When?

☰ In asking this question it is likely that members of the class will have a variety of opinions—and, in fact, it is very likely that the answer will be “both”, preferring one style of music in some worship contexts and another in different worship contexts.

❓ What questions do you have?

4. Jewish music then and now

A. In the Synagogue

Let’s listen to some selections of Reform liturgical music you would have heard in the synagogue sixty years ago and compare them to what you hear in the synagogue today.

Play

- i. 1. L’kha Dodi: versions by Isadore Freed and Craig Taubman (Friday Night Live)
- ii. Who is Like Unto Thee/Mi Chamocha: versions by Max Helfman and Debbie Friedman

The Freed and Helfman pieces are from the Milken website, “A Reform Sabbath Eve Service”  
<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/seder-tfillot/work/a-reform-sabbath-eve-service/>

Slide 3

Craig Taubman’s L’cha Dodi can be found at <https://youtu.be/olglYd6suts>

Slide 4

Max Helfman, “Who is Like Unto Thee?”  
<https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/seder-tfillot/work/a-reform-sabbath-eve-service>

Slide 5

Debbie Friedman’s Mi Chamocha can be found on  
YouTube @ [https://youtu.be/ix\\_b6e9nUHE](https://youtu.be/ix_b6e9nUHE)

Slide 6

B. In the Community

Let’s listen to some selections of music you would have heard around the Jewish community sixty years ago and compare them to what you hear today.

Then:

Effi Netzer’s Tzena Tzena: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48GRNDv4Z0k&feature=youtu.be>

Woody Guthrie’s This Land is Your Land: <https://youtu.be/7acFv9kGXCQ>

Slide 7

Now:

Rick Recht’s Od Yavo: <https://youtu.be/gtILPtK2kcE>

Six13’s A Lion King Passover: <https://youtu.be/qervY5HSzqM>

Slide 8

Slide 9

- ❓ What came to mind as you heard these different pieces of music?
- ❓ How do these different pieces of music make you feel? Why?
- ❓ What factors (historic/social/etc), do you think, account for the differences between the music of the 1950s and the music of today?

5. Case Studies: Contemporary Musical influences

A. Debbie Friedman: a folk-rock revolution

Slide 10

☰ This case study focuses on the popularity of the guitar, the creation of liturgical music in camps and youth movements, the Folk Music revival, musical composition by non-cantors, the inclusion of congregations in singing, and the social revolution influences of the late 60s...


(This case study is excerpted from: “Sing Unto God: Debbie Friedman and the Changing Sound of Jewish Liturgical Music”, by Judah M. Cohen, Lou and Sybil Mervis Professor of Jewish Arts and Culture, Borns Jewish Studies Program, Musicology Department, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. A full copy of Cohen’s article is available in the Appendices)

Read to the class the first paragraph on the case study:

“Mount Zion Temple, St. Paul, Minnesota; the Friday night of Memorial Day Weekend, May 26, 1972. Shortly after 8:15 PM, 21-year-old songleader/songwriter Debbie Friedman began to strum her guitar from the pulpit. Bassist Mark Leonard and drummer Bob Cohen joined her, supporting her chords with a contemporary sound that likely had never before echoed through the sanctuary—even after the Temple Youth Group service held the previous week. Behind her, dressed in black pants/skirts and white tops, the Highland Park Senior High School Camerata began to sing in unison the music that they had been rehearsing in class for weeks: “Sing unto God, sing a new song/O sing praises to God, give thanks to Him with a song/O sing praises unto the Lord thy God.”

Play “Sing Unto God” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n-KO\\_3z4YU&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n-KO_3z4YU&feature=youtu.be)

Divide the class into hevruta (pairs). Instruct them to read the following aloud to each other. While one reads, the other should highlight the historical/social factors that influenced Friedman’s evolution into the central figure in this new direction in Jewish music.

 **The case study text, found in the Appendices, should be copied for all participants.**

Reconvene as a group at the conclusion of the reading of the case study.

Ask the different groups to share the items they uncovered as they read the case study.

- ① What were the social/historical factors that you uncovered?
- ② Do any of the social/historical factors that were in play for Debbie Friedman in the late 1960s/early 1970s remain important factors today? What are they?
- ③ Are there additional social/historical factors/elements that were not mentioned in the case study that you feel were a significant contributing factor to this transformation in Jewish music?
- ④ The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion is the Reform movement institution for training cantors. Debbie, as we have seen in the case study, was not a cantor, in fact not even a 'trained' musician. Why do you think the school is named after her?
- ⑤ What, if anything, does this convey about today's synagogue music?

If there is time , especially if the participants never saw Debbie Friedman perform in person, you might consider giving your class the opportunity to watch the following video:

Miriam's Song: <https://youtu.be/461-g9HP8gc>

## B. Technology

Technology and particularly the internet have changed everything about... everything. Let's brainstorm for a moment about what has changed due to advancements in technology and, in particular, internet access.

Slide 11

- ☰ Create a list on the black/white board of all the ways the ways the class can come up with that technology and the internet have “changed” the way we interact, the way we create, produce and access data, the way we shop ... etc

Continue exploring how technological advances in creation/generation (composition, recording technology) and distribution of music have impacted Jewish music and the Jewish community in profound ways.

As we look and listen to some of the following examples think about how they have changed the creation, distribution and access to Jewish music.

Watch: The Maccabeats, Candlelight  
<https://youtu.be/qSJCSR4MuhU>

Slide 12

Discuss: This music video by the Maccabeats, created and posted on Youtube just prior to Hanukkah in 2010 was one of the first of its kind and became an internet sensation! (Note how many times it has been viewed.)

- ❓ How many of you have seen this video?
- ❓ What impact has this video had?
- ❓ How many videos have you seen that are similar?

Help your participants to think about the many ways that the internet has significantly changed the production, distribution and consumption of music; and how this video similarly played a significant role in changing the production, distribution and consumption of Jewish music. (ie. the proliferation of other groups and artists using the internet - and in particular YouTube - to promote their a capella groups, music videos and the many synagogues that have begun creating their own videos, the “acceptability” of the internet as a venue for the distribution of music, etc.)

- ❓ What impact has this video and others like it had on music in the synagogue? In the larger Jewish community?

Listen to Jewish Rock Radio: <https://jewishrockradio.com/>  
Explore the Jewish Rock Radio website.

Slide 13

Discuss: Jewish Rock Radio was launched by Jewish musician Rick Recht about the same time as the Maccabeats “Candlelight” was becoming a Youtube hit in the Jewish community. It was one of the first exclusively Jewish rock online radio stations in the United States, and runs programming 7 days a week and 24 hours a day. It was conceived as a global communications channel for Jews across the world. Recht was inspired to create Jewish Rock Radio after seeing how Christian rock radio stations operated. Its mission is “to strengthen Jewish identity and connection for youth through their love of music, musical instruments, and online interaction”.

- ❓ How many of you are familiar with Jewish Rock Radio?
- ❓ What impact do you think this station has on Jewish music?
- ❓ On the Jewish community?
- ❓ On the creation and distribution of Jewish music?

Go to Facebook: Jewish Songwriters Challenge  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1998225577112941/>

Slide 14

Discuss: The Jewish Songwriters Challenge is a “by invitation” FB group that began at the very end of 2017. Its purpose is to encourage page members to create, share and distribute new Jewish music.

- ❓ What does a forum such as this say about the creation of Jewish music today?
- ❓ What impact do you think a forum such as this might have

on Jewish music?

- ❓ On the Jewish community?
- ❓ Where, if anywhere, does the authority lie today for creating music for the synagogue?
- ❓ What do you see as the influences of technology on the creation and dissemination of Jewish music today?

Introduction: **The internet has also made accessible to the general public large quantities of information that otherwise might have been inaccessible - or, at the very least, much more cumbersome to access.**

Go to: The Ruth Rubin Legacy: Archive of Yiddish Folksongs  
<https://exhibitions.yivo.org/exhibits/show/ruth-rubin-sound-archive/home>

Slide 15

Explore the website briefly to give students a sense of what is there.

Conclude: **Let's go back to the list we created.**

- ❓ **Is there anything that you would add? In general, or particularly as it might relate to Jewish music?**

C. Israel

Slide 16

Introduction: A third major factor influencing changes in Jewish music in America is Israel. In particular, the Six Day War was a moment of transformation in the American Jewish community.

Read the excerpt from Jonathan Sarna's "American Judaism"

- ❓ **What were the social and historical factors at play in 1967 that made this such a transformational moment for the American Jewish community?**

Introduce Naomi Shemer,  
Play "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav"

Slide 17

Discuss: The impact of the Six Day War on American Jewish culture is a history that is still being written, but we know that it had significant impact on the music heard in the American Jewish Community.

For instance: the change from the use of Ashkenazic to Sephardic Hebrew ushered in new opportunities for song writers and liturgists (as we have seen above with Debbie Friedman).

**?** In a time before the internet, how did this music find its way to America?

**☰** Here it is important to discuss the role of “shlichim” who brought Israeli culture to Jewish summer camps in the 1960’s and 70’s in a more earnest way, cantorial concerts influenced by the enthusiasm for Israel generated by the Six Day War - and the singing of Hatikvah at the conclusion of many activities and events.

After 1967 the future leadership of the Reform and Conservative movements in America were required to spend a year learning in Israel. There, they experience Israeli society and culture.

**?** How do you imagine that these rabbis, cantors and educators spending a year learning in Israel has impacted the American Jewish community over the past 50 years?

The influence on Jewish American culture of Hasidic Song Festival.

Play Nurit Hirsh’s “Oseh Shalom” which won third place in the 1969 Hasidic Song Festival

<https://youtu.be/1AOFxz4xs14>

Slide 18



- ① 5 decades later, what artists are now reflecting/capturing the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community?

Play: Achinoam Nini, Mishaela: <https://youtu.be/RYOvjHe5z3c>

**Slide 19**

Play: Nava Tehila, Oseh Shalom: <https://youtu.be/vZnrmgkbnug>

**Slide 20**

- ① We have looked at three major factors influencing the changes that have taken place in the composition, distribution and access to music. Are there other factors that you can think of that we have not yet mentioned?

☰ If there are responses list them on the board.

Conclude: In part 2 of this lesson we will look at some of the newest developments in Jewish music and try to understand where they have come from and how they are impacting the American Jewish community today.