

JEWISH MUSIC 101

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS

סיפורי מוסיקה
STORIES OF MUSIC



Introduction

In this lesson we are going to explore Jewish music in a way that we hope will reinforce what you already know about Jewish music and tradition, but will also challenge some of your conceptions about the topic. When we finish this lesson, we hope you have new insights into what constitutes Jewish music, and how it relates to the American Jewish experience. We include music written for and used in sacred Jewish spaces but also music written by Jewish composers or songwriters for secular settings and general audiences.

Artists and Their Music Featured in This Lesson

Joseph Achron - Read more [here](#)

- [The Golem \(Suite\), IV. "Dance of the Phantoms"](#)

Irving Berlin — Read more [here](#)

- ["God Bless America" \(Kate Smith\)](#)
- ["God Bless America" \(Connie Francis\)](#)
- ["God Bless America" \(New Yiddish version\)](#)
- [About "God Bless America"](#)

Leonard Bernstein — Read more [here](#)

- [Symphony #1. \("Jeremiah"\)](#)
- [About "Jeremiah"](#)

Max Bruch — Read more [here](#)

- ["Kol Nidre" \(full video: only a portion is excerpted in the lesson\)](#)

Leonard Cohen — Read more [here](#)

- ["Who By Fire?"](#)

Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings — Read more [here](#)

- ["Eight Days of Hanukkah"](#)

Matisyahu — Read more [here](#)

- ["King Without a Crown"](#)

Yisrael Oshri

- ["Kol Nidre"](#)

Yossele Rosenblatt — Read more [here](#)

- ["Kol Nidre" \(full video: only a portion is excerpted in the lesson\)](#)

Morris Rosenfeld — Read more [here](#)

- ["Mayn Rue Platz"](#)
- [About "Mayn Rue Platz"](#)

Yaakov Rotblit/Yair Rosenblum (writer/composer); Miri Aloni (performer)

— Read more [here](#)

- [“Shir LaShalom”](#)

Nani (Noam Vazana) — Read more [here](#)

Alon Sariel — Read more [here](#)

- [“Cuando el Rey Nimrod”](#)

Alan Shulman — Read more [here](#)

- [“Kol Nidre” \(full video: only a portion is excerpted in the lesson\)](#)

Barbara Streisand — Read more [here](#)

- [“Where Is It Written?”](#)

Other Featured Individuals in This Lesson

[Klezmorim \(performer\)](#)

[Kate Smith](#)

Recordings Used in This Lesson (in order of the lesson)

Kol Nidre

- [Yossele Rosenblatt](#)
- [Max Bruch](#)
- [Yemenite](#)
- [Alan Shulman](#)
- [All four](#)

Trope samples

- [5 versions of Genesis 1:1-5](#)

[Blessing before Haftarah](#)

[Symphony #1 “Jeremiah” \(Leonard Bernstein\)](#)

- [Link to full liner notes](#)

[“Mayn Rue Platz”](#)

- [About “Mayn Rue Platz”](#)

[“Shir LaShalom”](#)

[“Cuando el Rey Nimrod”](#)

[“God Bless America”](#)

- [Kate Smith](#)
- [Connie Stevens](#)
- [New Yiddish version](#)
- [About “God Bless America”](#)

[“Who by Fire?” \(Leonard Cohen\)](#)

[“Where Is It Written?” \(Barbara Streisand\)](#)

[“King without a Crown” \(Matisyahu\)](#)

[“Eight Days of Hanukkah” \(Sharon and the Dap Kings\)](#)

Featured Topics in This Lesson

Kol Nidre

- [“A Brief History of the Kol Nidrei Prayer”](#) by Cantor Deborah Cannizzaro
- [“The Untold History of Kol Nidre”](#) by staff of ANU: Museum of the Jewish People
- [“Kol Nidre: The Power of Words”](#) by Cantor Matt Axelrod

Diversity in Jewish Music

- [“A Brief History of the Kol Nidrei Prayer”](#) by Cantor Deborah Cannizzaro

Cantillation/Trope System

- [“Cantillation: Chanting or Leyning the Bible”](#) by Marsha B. Edelman

What Does “Jewish” Mean?

- [“What Are Jews? A religion? An ethnicity? Yes”](#) by Dr. Phil Zuckerman

What Are Tishah B’Av and Lamentations?

- [“Tishah B’Av 101”](#) by MyJewishLearning Staff
- [“Lamentations”](#) by Shawn Aster (MyJewishLearning.com)

Did Americans Know About the Holocaust During the Holocaust?

- [“It’s Not That the Story Was Buried: What Americans in the 1930s Really Knew About What Was Happening in Germany”](#) by Lily Rothman

The Golem Legend

- [“Modern Jewish History: The Golem”](#) by Alden Oreck

Labor Conditions Then and Today

- [“History of Sweatshops 1880-1940”](#) by National Museum of American History Behring Center
- [“Toil and Testament: Sweatshop Poets”](#) by Yiddish Book Center staff
- [“11 Facts about Sweatshops”](#) by DoSomething.org staff
- [“What You Can Do about Sweatshops”](#) by GreenAmerican.org staff

- [“Triangle Shirtwaist Triangle Fire”](#) by History.com editors

War and Peace Concerns

- [“The War of Attrition”](#) by IDF (Israel Defense Forces Staff)
- [“The Sound of a Legacy: Music and Yitzhak Rabin”](#) by icenter.org staff
- [“How Thoughts and Prayers Went from Common Condolence to Cynical Meme”](#) by A.J. Willingham
- [“Thoughts and Prayers: Taking a Deeper Look at a Popular Yet Polarizing Phrase”](#) by Jonathan Foiles

Nimrod and Abraham

- [“Nimrod and Abraham: The Two Rivals”](#) by Nissan Mindel (Chabad.org)
- [“Ibrahim”](#) by Islamic House of Wisdom staff
- [“The Life of Abraham: Scenes from Hebrew Manuscripts.”](#) The National Library of Israel

Ladino

- [“What Is Ladino?”](#) by Dr. Isaac Benabu (MyJewishLearning.com)

Piyyut — Liturgical poetry

- [“Piyyutim: Religious Poetry”](#) by Dr. Reuven Hammer (excerpt from *Entering the High Holy Days*)
- [“Jewish Liturgical Music from Muslim Lands: Piyyutim and Pop Culture in Israel”](#) by Dr. Eli Sperling

Genres of Judeo-Spanish Music — Including the *copla*

- [“Romancero, Coplas, and Cancionero: Typology of the Judeo-Spanish Repertoire”](#) by Dr. Susana Weich-Shahak, The National Library of Israel
- [“The Copla”](#) (ibid.)

The Great American Songbook

- [“What Is the Songbook?”](#) by The Great American Songbook Foundation staff

Tainted Greatness?

- [“‘A song is never just a song’: The complicated history behind the controversy over Kate Smith’s ‘God Bless America’”](#) by Tom Schad
- [“The hateful side of Wagner’s musical genius”](#) by Marie Todeskino
- [“Jerks and Great Art”](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Use of “God Bless America”

- [“Congress Spontaneously Singing ‘God Bless America’ on September 11, 2001 \(C-Span\)”](#)
- [“The Singing of ‘God Bless America’ on September 11, 2001”](#) by editors of History, Art & Archives

JEWISH MUSIC 101

LYRICS

Kol Nidre — Aramaic, transliteration and translation

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְחַרְמֵי וְקוֹנָמֵי וְכַנּוּזֵי. וְקוֹנְסֵי (וּשְׁבוּעוֹת) דְּנִדְרָנָא. וְדִאֲשַׁתְּבַעְנָא. וְדִאֲחַרְמִנָּא. וְדִאֲסָרְנָא עַל
נַפְשֵׁתָנָא. (מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים) הִבָּא עֲלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה. (בְּ)כְלָהוֹן אַחַרְטַנָּא בְּהוֹן. כְּלָהוֹן יְהוֹן שְׂרָן.
שְׁבִיקוּן. שְׁבִיתוּן. בְּטַלִּין וּמְבַטְלִין, לֹא שְׂרִירִין וְלֹא קִיּוּמִין: נִדְרָנָא לֹא נִדְרֵי. וְאֶסְרָנָא לֹא אֶסְרֵי. וּשְׁבוּעָתָנָא לֹא
שְׁבוּעוֹת:

*Kol nidrei ve'esarei vacharamei,
v'konamei, v'chinuyei, v'kinusei ush-
vu'ot.*

All vows, prohibitions, consecrations,
pledges, promises, asseverations, and
oaths

*Dindarna, u-d'ishtabana, u-d'acharimna,
u-d'asarna al nafshatana.*

that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or
prohibit upon ourselves

*Mi-Yom Kippurim ze ad Yom Kippurim
haba aleinu l'tova.*

from this Yom Kippur until next Yom
Kippur--may it come to us propitiously--

*Kul'hon ichratna v'hon; kul'hon y'hon
sharan.*

We regret having made them; may they
all be permitted, abandoned,
eradicated, nulled and voided, and may
they not be valid or exist any longer.

*Sh'vikin, sh'viti, b'teilin, u-m'vutalin, la
sh'ririn v'la kayamin.*

Our vows shall not be valid vows; our
prohibitions shall not be valid
prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be
valid oaths.

*Nirvana la nidrei, ve-esarana la esarei, u-
sh'vu-atana la sh'vu'ot.*

Notes

- Some texts have וּשְׁבוּעוֹת, “oaths,” as וּשְׁבוּעֵי and placed as the third term instead of the seventh.
- Some texts state מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים שְׁעֵבֵר עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה, “from last Yom Kippur to this Yom Kippur” instead of “from this Yom Kippur until next Yom Kippur.”

Genesis 1:1-5 — text with trope, translation

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:
וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר:
וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:
וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר יוֹם וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

When God began to create heaven and earth—

the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—

God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

Mayn Rue Platz — Yiddish transliteration and translation (Morris Rosenfeld)

*Nit zukh mikh vu di mirtn grinen
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen
Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.*

Where lives wither at the machines,
There is my resting place.

*Nit zukh mikh vu di feygl zingen
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
A shklaf bin ikh vu keytn klingen
Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.*

Don't look for me where birds sing,
You will not find me there, my beloved.
A slave am I, where chains clang.
There is my resting place.

*Nit zukh mikh vu fontanen shpritsn
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
Vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn
Dortn iz mayn rue-plats.*

And if you love me with true love,
Then came to me, my good beloved,
And light up my gloomy heart,
And make sweet my resting place.

*Un libstu mikh mit varer libe,
To kum tsu mir, mayn guter shats,
Un hayter oyf mayn harts di tribe
Un makh mir zis mayn rue plats.
Don't look for me where myrtles grow,
You will not find me there, my beloved.*

And if you love me with true love,
So come to me, my good beloved,
And cheer my gloomy heart
And make sweet my resting place.

Shir LaShalom — Hebrew transliteration and translation
(Yaakov Rotblit and Yair Rosenblum)

*T'nu lashemesh la'alot
laboker l'ha'ir
Hazaka shebat'filot
otanu lo tach-zir*

Let the sun rise in the east,
and light the morning sky
The finest prayers will not revive
the ones who had to die.

*Mi asher kava nero
u-v'afar nitman
Bechi mar lo ya'iro
lo yach-ziro l'chan*

Those whose flames have been put out,
lie buried in the earth,
Bitter wails won't wake them up,
cannot give them rebirth.

*Ish otanu lo yashiv
mibor tach-tit afel -
kan lo yo'ilu -
lo sim-chat hanitzachon
V'lo shirei hallel*

No one can restore us now,
return us from the grave.
And here there is no use
for songs of victory
and praises for the brave.

***Lachen rak shiru
shir lashalom
al til-hashu t'fila
lachen rak shiru shir lashalom
bitz'aka g'dola***

**So go and sing
a song of Shalom -
don't whisper timid prayers.
Go out and shout a song of Shalom -
so everyone can hear.**

*T'nu lashemesh lachador
miba'ad lap'rachim
al tabitu l'achor
hanichu lahol-chim*

Let the sunshine weave its way
through rainbow blooms of flowers.
Don't look back towards the past -
the dead no longer ours.

*S'u einayim b'tikva
lo derech kavanot
shiru shir la'ahava
v'lo lamil-chamot*

Lift your eyes with hope of life,
not sighting through a gun.
Sing a song of love and joy
and not of battles won.

*Al tagidu yom yavo
havi'u et hayom -
ki lo chalom hu -
u-v'chol hakikarot
hari'u rak shalom*

Don't just say "A day will come";
go out and bring that day!
It's not a dream.
In all the city streets and squares,
sing "Peace is on its way!"

(Lachen rak...)

(So go and sing...)

Cuando el Rey Nimrod — Ladino and translation

*Kuando el rey Nimrod al campo salia
mirava en el cielo y en la estrelleria
vido una luz santa en la juderia
que havia de naser Avraham Avinu.*

***Avraham Avinu, Padre querido
Padre bendicho, luz de Yisrael. (x2)***

*Luego a las comadres encomendava
que toda mujer que prenyada quedara
si paria un hijo, al punto la matara
que havia de naser Avraham Avinu.*

(Avraham Avinu... x2)

When King Nimrod went out to the countryside
He was looking at heaven and at the stars
He saw a holy light in the Jewish quarter
[A sign] that Abraham, our father, was about to be born.

**Abraham our Ancestor, beloved father
Blessed father, light of Israel. (x2)**

Then he told the midwives
That every woman who was still pregnant
If she gave birth to a male child at once
he will be killed
because Abraham our father was about to be born.

(Abraham our Ancestor... x2)

God Bless America — Revised version (1938) (Irving Berlin)

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home

Who By Fire?

(Leonard Cohen)

From the mountains to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home
God bless America, my home sweet home

And who by fire, who by water
Who in the sunshine, who in the night time
Who by high ordeal, who by common trial
Who in your merry, merry month of May
Who by very slow decay
And who shall I say is calling?

And who in her lonely slip, who by barbiturate
Who in these realms of love, who by something
blunt
Who by avalanche, who by powder
Who for his greed, who for his hunger
And who shall I say is calling?

And who by brave assent, who by accident
Who in solitude, who in this mirror
Who by his lady's command, who by his own
hand
Who in mortal chains, who in power
And who shall I say is calling?

Where is it Written

(Lyrics by: Alan and Marilyn Bergman; Performer by: Barbra Streisand)

There's not a morning I begin
Without a thousand questions
Running through my mind
That I don't try to find the reason
And the logic in the world
That God design
The reason why, a bird was given wings
If not to fly, and praise the sky
With every song it sings
What's right or wrong
Where I belong
Within the scheme of things
And why have eyes that see
And arms that reach
Unless you're meant to know there's
Something more
If not to hunger for the meaning of it all
Then tell me what a soul is for
Why have the wings unless you're meant
to fly
And tell me please why have a mind
If not to question why
And tell me where

Where is it written what it is I'm meant to be
That I can't dare to have the chance to
Pick the fruit of every tree
Or have my share of every sweet imagined
possibility
Just tell me where, where is it written,
tell me where
If I were only meant to tend the nest
Then why does my imagination sail
Across the mountains and the seas
Beyond the make-believe of any fairy tale
Why have the thirst if not to drink the wine
And what a waste to have a taste
Of things that can't be mine
And tell me where
Where is it written what it is I'm meant to be
That I can't dare to see the meanings
In the mornings that I see
Or have my share of every sweet imagined
possibility
Just tell me where, where is it written, tell me
where
Or if it's written anywhere

King Without a Crown

(Matisyahu)

You're all that I have and you're all that I need
Each and every day I pray to get to know you please
I want to be close to you, yes I'm so hungry
You're like water for my soul when it gets thirsty
Without you there's no me
You're the air that I breathe
Sometimes the world is dark and I just can't see
With these, demons surround all around to bring me down to negativity
But I believe, yes I believe, I said I believe
I'll stand on my own two feet
Won't be brought down on one knee
Fight with all of my might and get these demons to flee
Hashem's rays fire blaze burn bright and I believe
Out of darkness comes light, twilight unto the heights
Crown Heights burnin' up all through till midnight
Said, thank you to my God, now I finally got it right
And I'll fight with all of my heart, and all a' my soul, and all a' my might

(Chorus:)

What's this feeling?
My love will rip a hole in the ceiling
Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being
Sing to my god all these songs of love and healing
Want Moshiach now so it's time we start revealing

What's this feeling?
My love will rip a hole in the ceiling
Givin' myself to you from the essence of my being
Sing to my God all these songs of love and healing
Want Moshiach now

(Verse 2:)

Strip away the layers and reveal your soul
Got to give yourself up and then you become whole
You're a slave to yourself and you don't even know
You want to live the fast life but your brain moves slow
If you're trying to stay high then you're bound to stay low
You want God but you can't deflate your ego
If you're already there then there's nowhere to go
If you're cup's already full then its bound to overflow
If you're drowning in the water's and you can't stay afloat
Ask Hashem for mercy and he'll throw you a rope
You're looking for help from God you say he couldn't be found
Looking up to the sky and searchin' beneath the ground
Like a King without his Crown

Yes, you keep fallin' down
You really want to live but can't get rid of your frown
Tried to reach unto the heights and wound bound down on the ground
Given up your pride and the you heard a sound
Out of night comes day and out of day comes light
Nullified to the One like sunlight in a ray,
Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze
Makin' room for his love and a fire gone blaze

(Chorus:)

(Verse 3:)

And see, I lift up my eyes where my help come from
And I seen it circling around from the mountain
Thunder!
You feel it in your chest
You keep my mind at ease and my soul at rest
You're not vexed

When I look to the sky where my help come from
And I've seen it circling around from the mountain
Thunder!
You feel it in your chest

Eight Days of Hanukkah

(Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings)

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight
Days of love
Days of eight
Days of Hanukkah
Everyone of them glows with love

Eight Days of Hanukkah
Everyone of them glows with love

Eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two

Day 1
Time to light a candle
For those Maccabees whose oil did burn and
burn

Day 2
Time to spin the dreidel
And hope that gimel shows up on my turn

Day 3
Fry a bunch of latkes with applesauce, sour
cream, and all

Day 4
We're cooking up the brisket
The kosher butcher sold my Uncle Saul

Day 5
I like it more than PESACH
Let's leave the manischewitz on the shelf

Day 6
Gifts for the children
Five dollar checks from Great Grandma Sel

Day 7
Light a whole bunch of candles
Gotta keep that Shamas going right to left
All the way until

Day 8
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight
Days of love
Days of eight days of Hanukkah
Every one of them glows with love
Eight days of Hanukkah
Every one of them glows with love (love)

Ooh

Eight days dreidel dreidel dreidel
Eight days I made it out of clay
Eight days and when it's dry and ready ..yahh
Eight days ooh dreidel I will
Eight days yay yay yay yay yay hey
Eight days
Eight days
Eight days
Eight days
Eight days
Eight days
Eight days