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JUNE 13, 1893.

SIR JOHN STAINER, MUS. DOC., PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

*ANCIENT MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE
SYNAGOGUE.*

BY THE REV. FRANCIS L. COHEN.

It has become almost one of the commonplaces of the historian of Music to contrast the absence of men of Jewish race from the list of distinguished musicians of the past, with their remarkable frequency among the more eminent composers and virtuosi of the present. It is not without justice that this contrast is attributed primarily to the results of the humanitarian sentiments which have arrived at so noble an elevation in this century. It was the declination of prejudice against the ancient people, and the gradual removal of the excessive civil and social disabilities under which they so long had laboured, that led to ready application to the most spiritual of the Arts on the part of a people whose quick sensibility and emotional energy had been cultivated during long consecutive centuries of intimacy with, and regard for, every form of literary production. Yet it is remarkable that the Jew, with all his adaptiveness, rose to pre-eminence in music sooner and more readily than in any other art. And if we turn from the composers of Hebrew origin, and concentrate our attention rather on the Israelite executants to be found in every orchestra, and on every concert-platform, we speedily are prompted to ask why the number of Jewish musicians of every grade not merely far exceeds the trifling numerical proportion which their race bears to the rest of the population, but is out of all comparison with the number and the corresponding proportion of Jewish painters, sculptors, architects, or, generally, followers of any art other than music.

To one acquainted with the history of Israel during the last two thousand years, the explanation appears obvious. For he will be aware that until quite recent times there prevailed in the inner Jewish life a marked distaste for the representation of figures and forms, founded upon an acute application of the Biblical fulminations against idolatry. Further, pictures or buildings were not a form of property

that would readily escape pillage or destruction during the centuries of persecution known as Jewish history. For melody, on the contrary, an affection has been ingrained in the Jewish nature ever since the days when the Temple of the Hebrew capital stood pre-eminent for its elaborate and highly organised musical service. There is no lack of continuous contemporary testimony in Hebrew literature to bear witness to the extent to which the Jew has incessantly delighted to associate his daily worship, and even his literary exercise, with some form of vocal tunefulness. Hence the Hebrew found ever a befitting occasion for, and a ready facility in, the employment of music, while his songs needed neither transport nor protection, because they were graven deep upon the hearts of his people.

The Liturgy of the Jews, round which their traditional music centres, is characterised by exceeding in the number and length of its devotional exercises that of most other religious bodies. Their singularly rich literature is almost entirely based on their religious doctrine and discipline; and the hours are many which the observant Jew devotes to public worship, extending to the whole of the day on the most sacred occasion of the religious year. As tradition requires the celebrant to utter with the singing voice every word he recites aloud, the chants that have been handed down are in consequence numerous. It thus becomes necessary to bear in mind the history of the Jewish Liturgy when considering the antiquity of this or of that musical tradition of the Synagogue. These literary considerations are of high interest in themselves, but it will suffice here if they be very briefly summed up. The student of Hebrew literature learns that from the period when the Book of Psalms was compiled the Jew has been continuously exhorted to devote his highest musical attainments to the service of the Sanctuary. The chant associated with text, praise, or prayer has always been melodiously definite, for from an early date it was found expedient to delegate to a professional Reader or Precentor what had originally been the duty and privilege of any competent member of the congregation. Thus down to our own day there has been a sequence of specialists in Hebrew melody, which implies a faithful tradition of the older chants and a capacity to introduce new ones as occasion arose. In brief, there is incontestable external evidence for the hoary antiquity of some portion of the Jewish worship-music.

When we turn to the more technically musical side of our investigation, and attempt to discriminate from internal evidence between ancient, mediæval, and modern synagogue music, we find it necessary to brush away a host of inaccurate assumptions. Few go so far in their anachronism, perhaps, as the clergyman who printed a fly-leaf I have, giving the

words of a Hebrew hymn written by a mediæval Spanish Jew, with a simple modern-toned tune composed for it by a lamented old friend and teacher of my own. On this fly-leaf appears a statement, put soberly, to the effect that "it is believed that these words and this tune were composed for the dedication of the Holy Temple by Ezra." The Doctors of the Talmud were very prone to refer antique institutions to Ezra, but of such an anachronism they were scarcely capable. And yet serious musicians have often almost as readily overlooked the peculiar features one might justly expect to find in ancient Jewish music, and have been too prone to instance as characteristic the passages in which a Western tonality has come with a familiar pleasantness to their perceptions. Take, for example, the collection of synagogue tunes made in Waterloo year by John Braham and Isaac Nathan, for which Byron wrote his famous "Hebrew Melodies." Only one of these airs—the one which Robert Franz has so admirably arranged for the pianoforte—has any traces of Jewish song older than the grandfathers, at most, of the two compilers.

In having the distinguished privilege of addressing you this evening I am obliged, by the time at your and my disposal, to limit myself to the more ancient musical traditions of the Synagogue; and therefore I at once proceed, by a process of exhaustion, to eliminate Jewish music of modern and mediæval origin. I first reject the whole body of the choral music used in the Synagogue, where the general employment of a four-part choir scarcely reaches back more than a generation. I then set aside, because of their obvious modernness, all melodic passages that are merely echoes of the tonal expression of the Gentile musical world. I next pass over tunes set to texts of a measured rhythm, since Hebrew verses measurable by rhythmic alternation of stress and non-stress are, at the very earliest, the product of mediæval Arab influence. Just so, strictly mensurate music cannot claim to be ancient. For a similar reason almost the whole of the traditional music of that important section of the Jews which long dwelt in Spain is set aside, its Moorish origin being readily apparent.

Although the greater bulk of what is customarily termed Jewish music has now been eliminated, a mass of important dimensions and of fascinating interest remains. It is this which I propose to introduce to your notice and, I feel confident, your admiration this evening. I have found difficulty rather in limiting my selections than in selecting representative passages from the older chants of the Jews of Northern Europe, by whom alone any ancient Palestinian traditions have, in my opinion, been preserved. In certain important respects the rendering of the illustrations to

which you will, in a few minutes, be listening, differs from the actual form followed for ages in the synagogues. In the first place, the *Hazan* (the Reader, or Precentor, of a synagogue) will be represented by a lady vocalist. But, as Mrs. Cohen is the daughter of one of the most eminent *Hazanim* (Precentors) of the day, there is a precedent for the rendition, by her, of these Hebrew melodies. In the year 1275 the congregation in the city of Worms set a monument over the grave of the sweet-voiced and learned lady Urania, who was the daughter of the chief Precentor of their synagogue, and who used to chant the service in the chapel of the Worms Synagogue reserved for women. And in Polish synagogues even now you will not fail to come across the aged person who acts as "sagerin" (readeress) for a select circle of associates less profoundly versed in the Hebrew tongue, crooning forth the prayers in a dove-like lament, and usually weeping most bitterly at the most joyous passages of the ritual. The traditional service is couched in the Hebrew language; but to bring home the peculiarly apt tonal expression of the text, I have given an English paraphrase to most of the selected passages. Then I have endeavoured to present most of this ancient synagogue music in an outer garb approximating to the modern array of vocal music, so that while I leave the melodies in all their antique and characteristic freshness, my accompaniments, crude as they are, will possibly tempt you to compare them with the style of melody more familiar to our Western ears.

Until the present day, when the organ has been introduced into a few synagogues, the solitary instrument played upon in Jewish worship has been the *Shophar*. This is an early form of the old Oriental trumpet, of which the Roman *lituus* is a developed type. The traditional *Shophar* is a ram's horn, manipulated after long soaking in hot water, when the solid part of the horn is straightened and pierced, its tip cut off, and a very elementary mouthpiece, of more or less oval shape, moulded; after which the interior is pared smooth, and the exterior planed and polished. It then usually possesses a roughly cylindrical bore of small calibre, expanding at the curve upward towards the original base of the horn into a sort of flattened parabolic bell, the side walls fairly parallel. The length of the instrument varies from nine inches to two feet, but may be said to average fifteen inches. The pitch, of course, varies according to the length, &c. In the Oriental world, the horn often keeps its original curled form. But that appears to be but a fancy variant; and if the horn which was discovered in the foundations on rebuilding premises in Leadenhall Street in the year 1855 really dates, as may fairly be assumed, back to the Jews who resided in England before

frequency of the tube.

The calls on the *Shophar* generally employ the third, fourth, and sixth partials of the tube's harmonic series; and, as two notes only are used, these are either tonic and dominant, or dominant and its octave. Two combinations of these notes have been in use ever since the tenth chapter of Numbers was written. They are the *Tekiah* (stroke) and the *Teruah* (sound). Towards the close of the Temple period, there existed a kind of time-notation in the Talmudical record that one *Tekiah* measures three *Teruoth*, and one *Teruah* measures three *Yebaboth* (sobs), or three *Shebarim* (broken sounds). Each flourish was then ordered to comprise three calls—viz., a *Teruah* preceded and followed by a *Tekiah*. In the Temple, these flourishes were sounded on the long straight silver trumpets as signals, in the same fashion as modern military bugle calls. There were, we learn, a number of trumpeters varying from two to one hundred and twenty on duty; and they sounded daily a series of flourishes ranging, according to the importance of the day, from seven to sixteen. After the fall of Jerusalem it was arranged that three flourishes on the *Shophar* should be sounded in the synagogues during Morning Prayer on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii, 24; Num. xxix. 1). But it soon became apparent that the confusion of tradition consequent upon the grave political catastrophes of the time had extended to the particular form of the *Teruah*, and that while some held that it resembled three sobs, others had been taught to give it as a long shake, or a rapid succession of double-tongued notes. In order, then, to sound the same calls as had been heard in the Temple from the silver trumpets (including those very ones that are depicted on the Arch of Titus), it was ordained by the great Cæsarean Rabbin, Abbahu, about the beginning of the third century, that the three required flourishes should be sounded once with each of the two variants of the *Teruah* and with the combination of them. Hence the order, observed to the present day, of nine flourishes or thirty calls, the series concluding with a prolonged or "great" *Tekiah*.

The oldest vocal traditions of the Synagogue are enshrined in the *Neginoth*, or accentual cantillations of Scripture. These Jewish systems of declamation are far brighter and more expressive than any other ancient cantillation, whether of the East or of the West; and what, if anything, they lose in solemnity they more than gain in vigour and vivacity. The recitation of the sacred text is by no means left to the free impulses of the reader. True that in the scrolls used for the public lessons the text is written in consonants alone, without any of the pointing by which the Hebrew vowels are designated. But just as in printed Hebrew Bibles you find the vowel points added to the text for the study of its vocalisation, so do you find the tonic accents added for the study of the cantillation; and the Precentor has to devote considerable time to learning by heart the chant-melody of several chapters at once. The cantillation no doubt existed in a highly developed form long before any notation for it was invented. The accents themselves—the mere dots and strokes—were probably evolved by the Massoretic school of Tiberias, about the seventh century. They, to a certain extent, resemble the *Neumes* of the old Gregorian ritual-books in appearance and in employment. Their functions are, however, much more complex. The signs, placed above or below the text, serve three distinct purposes—(a) they mark the tone-syllable of each word, the few enclitics excepted; (b) by their relative and interdependent values they indicate a most delicately-shaded syntactical punctuation; and (c) having been in origin (as I think) rough diagrams of the movement of the voice in oratorical declamation, they denote a chant which, with the most scrupulous fidelity, designates the mutual relation of the words of the text.

There are two systems of accents, the one employed for the three poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), and the other for the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although there are traces of it as late as the fifteenth century, the original musical signification of the system of the Three Books has fallen out of use; but several ancient forms of chant still exist for the cantillation of the Pentateuch and the prophetic and historical lessons. With each individual accent there is in each system associated a particular fixed sequence of notes, sometimes extending to a whole phrase. This is sung upon the tone-syllable of the word, as marked by the accent. The signs, some thirty in number, form a notation

at once sufficient to answer every need of the grammarian and the student of the cantillation. The melodic phrases, finally, blend smoothly into a homogeneous chant as a whole.

LAMENTATIONS. Cap. I.

Lento quasi recitativo e molto dolente.

1. A - las! . . . How . . . doth sit . . .

sol . . . i - ta - ry the ci - ty that once was

full of peo - ple! Now is she . . . like a widow. She that

great was among the na . . . tions, prin -

- cess a - mong the pro - vinces, is be - come . . .

tri - bu - ta - ry. 2. She weepeth sore in the lone - - ly

night, and her tears are on her cheeks; None are com - forters of

all her lov - ers. Her friends have all be - trayed her:

now . . . are they her e - ne - mies.

These chants have reached our age from hoary antiquity without material alteration in character or structure. This

conclusion may be induced from examination of the transcription of the ordinary Pentateuchal cantillation, which was printed by Reuchlin (*De accentibus, etc.*) so long ago as the year 1518. In the humblest Jewish Bethel of to-day precisely the same melodic phrases and style of combination will be heard every Sabbath, even where the name or the works of that great scholar have never been dreamt of. It is clear from Talmudical evidence that such a form of cantillation was used in the Herodian Temple, and none the less by the pleasant-voiced men who were exhorted to take the Precentor's place before the Ark in the synagogues. For temple and synagogue were contemporary. Not merely were there synagogues in foreign and provincial cities long before the Romans overwhelmed Zion, but in Jerusalem itself they numbered as many as four hundred and eighty. A distinguished Rabbīn, Joshua ben Hannania, has recorded that he, with his fellow Levites in the Temple choir, used to proceed from the Sanctuary when its elaborate musical services were ended, to take part in the ritual of the Synagogue. There can be little doubt that the Temple was not behind the Synagogue of to-day in utilizing the tonal system favoured by the musicians who were most regarded in contemporary civilisation. Thus, in all essentials, Hebrew music, in the days of the Second Temple, must have been founded on the same Asiatic systems as was the Greek music of the same age. The instruments recorded in the Psalms, in Chronicles, and in the contemporary traditions of the Talmud were instruments from the workshops of the most renowned makers of that day, who were naturally all Greeks. The coins that have survived make this clear pictorially on the one hand, while the absence from the Temple orchestra, as given in detail in the Talmud, of all instruments but those in similar use amongst the Greeks, makes it clear on the other. Even the name of the most famous singing-master of the Temple school, Hygros the Levite, has a Greek sound. These coincidences no longer surprise us when we remember that Greek music itself derived its basal system, and even much of its terminology, from Western Asia. Nor is any objection to my contention to be derived from the fact that the same accentual signs are applied by Jewish tradition to quite ten different schemes of chant. That these have been transmitted from the synagogues of the distant period when the same tonal influences were prevalent in Syria as moulded Greek music, becomes clear when we find that they almost entirely fall in such scale-forms as are known to students of Plainsong as the *Æolian*, the *Mixo-Lydian*, the *Hypo-Dorian*, the *Hypo-Æolian*, and the *Hypo-Mixo-Lydian* modes, to mention a few of the most favoured.

The very diversity of the modes in which these can-

tillations have been transmitted, co-existing with their close similarity in structural form, in melodic outline, and in method of combination, has led me to put forward a solution for that crux of commentators, the "headings" of the Psalms. That these are technical directions for musical performance is beyond dispute. I accept for these obscure headings none of the customary explanations—neither names of melodies, nor names of instruments, nor figurative references to the subject-matter—but I see in them simply the names of the form of chant, the scale or mode, in which the vocal movements afterwards designated by the accents were to be variously performed. When the present vowel-pointing was fixed by the Massoretes, several centuries of confusion had elapsed; and although tradition had probably preserved the musical practice of the Temple, the musical theory of the Levitical singing schools had probably been forgotten. Now if, instead of adopting the Massoretic attempts to make sense of the headings, we point the Hebrew only a little differently, we arrive at such expressions as Gittith, Aiolith, Javanith, Susan, Elamith—*i.e.*, Gathite, Æolian, Ionian, Susian, Elamite, and so on. Some of these names have exactly the same connotation in Greek, and the rest are paralleled by similarly geographical titles for the modes—*e.g.*, Phrygian, Dorian, Lydian, or Locrian. If this be correct, it comes about that the Psalms used to be chanted in the Temple in a form tonally parallel to the Plainsong of the Western Church, and still more so to the Antiphons of the Byzantine Greeks. But it by no means follows that the Churches have inherited the authentic Temple tradition, as used to be claimed. Gevaert's investigations into the history of Gregorian music have proved that the Christian chant first came into existence in Asia Minor, and arrived in the West by way of Antioch, Byzantium, and Rome. It is important to remember that the Plainsong originated amongst and was developed by men avowedly hostile to any form of "Judaising." But just as other details of Temple ceremonial have been accurately transmitted by the unbroken chain of Jewish tradition, so this Jewish system of cantillation has lived on in its continued use by the children of the men by whom it was originally introduced into Hebrew worship. Just as I, as a descendant of Aaron the High Priest, know how to pronounce the Levitical benediction over the congregation in the same manner as my ancestors pronounced it in the Temple, because the ceremony has been year after year through the centuries performed in the same way; just so may I know how to chant the Scriptures in a way similar to that favoured in the Temple, because the living tradition of synagogal practice will have transmitted it direct from the same ancient source.

When Scriptural passages were quoted in the course of the synagogal Ritual, it was customary to utter them with the appropriate cantillation. Some of the passages formed the central point of a service, and so from very early times the *Hazan* (Precentor) intoned them with a liberal embellishment of the ornaments ever favoured in Oriental melody and equally noticeable in the performance of modern Eastern musicians. Thus in course of time a florid form of recitative has become developed, based on the cantillation, and while originally reserved for the particular text with which it was associated, afterwards applied to the prayers recited in the immediate connection as well. In these, the recitative would be repeated with slightly less wealth of vocal embroidery, and with such variation of the original theme as would be necessitated by the differences in the length and syntactical structure of the succeeding sentences. While the melodic essentials of the passage are traditionally fixed, much freedom is allowed to the Precentor in the selection and combination of his roulades, so that there is scope for individual taste and style in the rendering of the recitative. Take, for instance, one distinguished German Precentor's rendering of the traditional chant for Genesis II., vv. 1 to 3, intoned in the Sabbath Service, the resemblance of which to characteristically Arab music is very marked:—

Senza rigor di tempo. *mf* 11

Thus were fin-ish-ed . . . the heavens and the

cres.

earth, and all the host . . . of them. Then

cres. 3

fin-ish-ed God . . . on the seventh day the work which

f

He . . . had made, and rest - ed on the seventh day . . . from

mf *cres.*

all . . . His work . . . which He had made. Then bles- sed God the

After the reading of the Scriptures the most important portion of a Jewish service is the sequence of benedictions known as the "Prayer" *par excellence*. This is a very ancient composition, its essentials originating as long ago as the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the form in which it is now recited dating back, as a whole, to at least the second century. Just as in the case of the Scriptural cantillations, so with the "Prayer" parallel forms of melodic utterance were anciently reserved for the same or similar passages, identical in structure and style, but varying in tonality according to the particular day in the liturgical year. Hence again we find the modes which distinguish the Plainsong of the Church employed in the prayer-motives of the Synagogue. The simplest of these motives is the one for week-day Morning Prayer, which is limited to the lower hexachord of the Phrygian mode (I throughout use the Church terminology), or rather, perhaps, as one of the notes appear to be but a chromatic ornament, to the antique Pentatonic scale. But others range more elaborately in the tonalities regarded as characteristic of the particular service and season of the religious year, through the Dorian, Phrygian, Hypo-Dorian, Hypo-Phrygian, Ionian, Mixo-Lydian, and other modes, which they well show to exhibit the characteristics ascribed to them by Adam de Fulda and other mediæval critics.

These chants for the chief prayer anticipate in remarkable fashion the form of the "Rondo," as they consist of a distinctive, if somewhat free, chief subject with which the text special to the occasion is introduced, after which the Precentor proceeds to intone elastic secondary subjects. These he will in turn develop according to the structure of the text, but will in each case work back to the original motive, which finally leads into a characteristic and well-defined *Coda*, the words to which are usually the doxological benediction closing the paragraph or section of the prayer.

In developing his theme, the *Hasan* is allowed considerable freedom of form, rhythm, and style; and he takes every advantage of that Oriental tendency towards *floritura* which the Jews who have been for centuries located in Northern Europe, far removed from the home of the vocal arabesque, even yet display. The old time *Hasan* was still fonder of "graces" than the Highland piper of "warblers," or the *bravura* singer of "divisions"; but the fixed nature of the *Coda* has sufficed to preserve a general agreement among the renderings favoured by the various local schools of "precentory." I may instance the themes for the Sabbath Morning Prayer, the "pauses" marking the reciting notes:—

FREE SUBJECT.

FIXED CODA.

Even where the mode is diatonic these motives are not strictly so, but a chromatic change is occasionally made of some one note of the scale, with a very beautiful melodic effect. Then, too, as will have already been seen, motives are found in tonalities closely resembling those of the Byzantine plain chant and the folksong of Asia Minor in the employment of the interval of an augmented second between the second and third degrees of the scale—and sometimes between the sixth and seventh as well, as in the modern harmonic form of the minor mode. In fact, there is a tendency among the Precentors of Eastern Europe to approach the modes of the Perso-Arab musical system in their incessant introduction of diminished and augmented intervals. The most frequently employed mode of this kind might indeed

be regarded as a plagal form of the minor or Æolian mode (as its sixth, the *Do*, has the effect of the Dominant of the Gregorian modes), were it not that *Mi* is clearly its Final, which makes it rather a chromatic form of the Phrygian mode.

Even compositions of comparatively modern date are to be found constructed in these ancient tonalities. Notable examples of this are hymns of which the refrain alone is chanted by the congregation, or in which Precentor and congregation chant antiphonally the alternate verses. Many of these are quite modern, and in all cases the words were written by European Jews of at least the earlier Middle Ages. But the tunes are often constructed in such modes as the Phrygian, Æolian, or Mixo-Lydian. The hymn to which belongs the tune known in English hymnals as "*Leoni*" (after the Jewish vocalist who sang it to Thomas Olivers, the author of the verses associated with it) possesses also an exquisite antiphonal setting in the chromatic Phrygian mode to which I just before referred, which was probably composed by a Polish Precentor in the early part of the last century. It has been used by Asger Hamerik in his "*Trilogie Judaïque*":—

PRECENTOR.
Lento.

CONGREGATION.

There is another synagogal form, rather in the mould of a "chant," of greater liturgical and musical antiquity. I refer to the versicles in rhymed prose, as it is called, which recur throughout a whole service or even series of services. The strains associated with them are very short; and as they are required for verses of greatly varying length they are usually constructed somewhat after the form of the Gregorian tones for the Psalms, with a reciting note, a mediation, and an ending. Yet their melodic character is far

more definite than is the case with the Gregorian tones, and most of the endings constitute a characteristic and effective musical phrase. Some again show a tendency towards rhythmical structure. These are marked by ancient tonalities; and are first given out by the Precentor in a *Reshuth* (announcement to the congregation of the introduction of praises or supplications supplementary to the regular Liturgy), and chanted as a refrain at the close of each meditation silently read by the congregation, or when a few stanzas of devotional verse introduce a new section of the prayers. Here, for instance, is the chief versicle-chant of the Atonement services—falling in the Dorian mode, save for the accidental, which is, however, a distinct melodic improvement—

Such short vocal phrases, again, are often welded together, if one may so express it, when the particular ideas with which they are respectively associated appear in combination at any portion of the service, and particularly at the approach of what may be termed a devotional crisis. And here we have an interesting anticipation of the modern use of the *representative theme*. It has been for ages the custom in the synagogue to associate certain strains with definite religious ideas, and to turn the devotional sentiment in the desired direction by the use of the appropriate musical enshrinement of the particular thought. Such leading motives find their chief employment in the form of anticipatory announcements, when they carry the mind on to the ensuing sacred day. They are also used in what may be termed *Introits*, where they often appear in the form of a *pneuma*, or wordless phrase in which the Precentor gives free vent to his emotions. Notice the combination of several such short subjects in the following illustration, including a portion of the *Kol Nidre*, which Max Bruch's transcription has made familiar. Observe, too, the many transitions from mode to mode, and even from key to key, in this one short passage from the Service of the Day of Memorial, the tonal sequence of which, however, is traditionally fixed—

appassionato.

Sov - ran, earth - ly blessings a - bove ! Him a - lone be -

longs . . . all cre - a - tion's praise. Ah !

Ah !

stringendo.

. . . of mar - vels He is Lord : He who deigneth to ac -

rit.

cept our song, King . . Al - migh - ty, Life of all . . worlds !

While the *Hazan* (Precentor) is traditionally entrusted with so much of a recitative character, there are numerous responses in which the congregation join in. These are mainly echoes of the last few notes of the Precentor's chant. Before the introduction in this century of organised choirs, the congregational part of the service was intoned by the worshippers in a simple and vague fashion; but there were also some definite chants in use, chiefly for Psalm verses or other Scriptural quotations. These were sung in unison; and the effect was very much more tuneful and varied than that of the Anglican chant, for there were often more notes than words to be chanted, and the tunes were of a definitely melodious nature. Most of those still in use possess a modern sound, but one or two include ancient phrases that are also met with in other forms of synagogue music. Notice, for example, the freedom and variety in the rendering of a few verses of a chant of the kind, antiphonal between Precentor and congregation. In this illustration we may also mark the plagal drop of a fourth at the close, which is so frequent in ancient synagogal phrases. We may observe, too, how the

chant, itself Hypo-Dorian, is eked out for an exceptionally long verse by the passing introduction, as a representative theme, of the subject in the Phrygian mode which is associated with the service next in order in the Liturgy.

Very much of the synagogue music that originated in the West, and was constructed after the tonal fashion of Gentile neighbours in Europe, was yet characteristically expressive of the Oriental origin, however remote in time, of those who sang it. The Hebrew of the Middle Ages, checked all around by an iron wall of isolation, turned inward for musical expression. The Precentor was inspired by the magnetic force of his congregants' sympathy to voice the aspirations after peace and freedom which soared heavenward from the hearts of a downtrodden people. He in his turn inspired the vocally gifted youths among his congregation to emulate his life-work. There was thus ever a guild of *Meshorrim* (singers) who, while the assistants of the *Hazan* (Precentors), were in effect their apprentices also. They were often literally journeymen, seeing that minstrel-like they wandered from synagogue to synagogue, assured of welcome and hospitality in every congregation of their brethren, whither they brought the compositions or peculiar versions of their master, and whence they carried to other cities the inspirations of their hosts. Until Precentors in our own day, learned in the technicalities of music, began to transcribe and print the traditional melodies, it was these itinerant rhapsodists alone who preserved the uniformity with which the ancient chants have been handed down.

It is especially in the *Selihoth* (propitiatory supplications) that the inspirations of such wandering Precentors survive. These are formless intonations of a pathetic tone, but often with a hopeful glance upwards towards the close of the chant corresponding to what is called the catholic expression in mediæval painting. The most famous of the masters among the Precentors of the past was the illustrious liturgical authority, Jacob Moelin Hallevi, Rabbi of Mayence, who died in the year 1427, and to whom the final redaction of the more ancient synagogue-music is with some justice attributed. He attached such excessive importance to accuracy in musical tradition, that when his only daughter died he considered

himself smitten in punishment for intoning the wrong melodies on a recent occasion when he had officiated as Precentor in the city of Regensburg. It is told of him that once, when the wise councillors of Mayence had forbidden their Jewish fellow-townsmen to employ any musicians, he put himself to the expense of carrying a bridal party, with the whole body of synagogal officials and of wedding guests, to another city, rather than permit the solemnization of a Jewish marriage without the presence of a band. But it was already before his time that the deeply pathetic tone of Jewish music in Northern Europe—its excess almost of feeling—had developed. For the previous centuries had been the age of the Crusades and the Black Death, when Jewish blood flowed more freely than water. Every reminiscence of the remote past, when Israel had been an independent nation, received an additional force from the contrast of contemporary servitude; and one can well understand how, in the recital of such a passage as the Talmudical description of the scene in the ancient Temple on the great Day of Atonement, the Precentor would rise to the highest point of wrestling with the cruel hand of his people's fate, and pour out his full heart in fervid supplication. Here is the rhapsody, replete with inarticulate vocalisation of a moving character, as a Precentor of the old school would give it, and preceded by the strain which is used as a refrain or chant-like ritornello to usher it in—

Grazioso.

Grave.

And the priests and the people that were stand -

ing in the Temple Court, Ah!

Ah! When they

poco stringendo.

sf down, Ah!

Ah!

a tempo. *pp* *cres.* *tr* *tr* *f rit.* *p* 3

Ah! and . . . fall - ing on their

grandioso.

fa - ces, and said: Bless His Name, whose glo-rious

king - dom is for ev - er - more.

Such was the music which took its characteristics from its Oriental birthplace, and in its quaintness and its pathos records the European history of the people among whom it was developed and preserved. Since, however, the combined effects of the Renaissance and the Reformation began to be felt in the greater personal and social liberty of the Jews in Europe, they have utilized the musical progress of their Gentile neighbours in their own service of song. This, indeed, had been done by the Jews of Spain from the year 711, when the Moors crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, and introduced into the Peninsular a musical system cognate with that of the Hebrews, until Granada was surrendered in 1492, and Torquemada's fell hand was able to wrench his Israelitish compatriots from the soil in which their hearts had taken root. These Spanish Jews, like the Mozarabian Christians around them, had in the course of the centuries adopted innumerable Mauresque chants into their own worship-music, some exquisite examples of which their descendants have preserved to this day. One of their later

poets, indeed—by name Israel Najara—has left us as many as six hundred and fifty Hebrew lyrics, mainly devotional, which he specially wrote to fit Arab melodies, and even arranged in the order of the Eastern scale-forms, in which he deemed their underlying sentiments individually found aptest expression. The German Jews, on the contrary, amid an alien culture and an alien art, and politically and socially degraded, tenaciously maintained the relics of their own ancient Oriental music. It was only in Italy that Solomo de' Rossi, singing master at the ducal court of Mantua, could have published his collection of twenty-eight original compositions for synagogal use, as he did in the year 1623. But in the last two centuries all this has happily been changed; and to such an extent has the old isolatory spirit disappeared from both without and within, that the congregations are not few, indeed, in which but a small proportion of the traditional music is ever heard; and some have even made the error, as I think they must acknowledge it to be, of abolishing the old Jewish florid intonation and reciting the whole of the service either with the speaking voice or in monotone. But, in compensation, just these congregations are remarkable for the elaborateness and high excellence of their choral arrangements. Where the old musical traditions are perpetuated, the improved tonal education of the general community has not been without its effect, and compositions on the lines of the chants, hymns, and anthems of the Protestant churches are with ever-growing frequency introduced. Thus, while treasuring their own ancient inheritance of song, modern Jews fall into line with their Gentile fellow-citizens, and even in that solitary direction—their religious practice—in which they agree to differ, in music, as in other arts, they work only for the common advantage of the great brotherhood of civilised humanity.

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I think we all expected to have an intellectual treat, but I was not prepared to have a musical one as well. I have been extremely gratified by the very charming lecture. Mr. Cohen touched on one or two points of deep interest to me. It has always been a puzzle to me how it is that Christianity has managed to lose all its Asiatic music—Semitic music, I should say. Perhaps Mr. Cohen could tell us something concerning that question, about which it is very difficult to get any information. I am going to ask some other questions. I came to-night to learn as much as I possibly could. One I wish to ask is whether Mr. Cohen has any reason to think that there was never an enharmonic scale amongst the Semites. Another question I should like to ask is this: have the beautiful chants to which we have been listening a regular recurring form? I could not quite trace it. Also, would Mr. Cohen tell me when mensurable music first found its way into Synagogue use? I cannot sit down without expressing to Mr. Cohen my gratitude for the great amount of information in his paper.

THE LECTURER.—It may promote clearness if I answer each speaker in turn. The earliest Christians, who were Jews, naturally used Hebrew music in their devotions. But when the work of the Apostle Paul began to be effective, Christianity was no longer closely allied to Judaism, and the Gentile art amidst which the Gentiles newly gathered into the fold had grown up was the influence felt in the choice of worship-music. Certainly that music at first, being Greek, was of a system parallel to that of the Jews. Yet I cannot doubt that the profound feelings of dislike which were afterwards felt against religious tendencies of Jewish origin affected the worship-music of the early churches—and for the same reason, it being naturally of a tone alien to the unexpressed sentiments of the Christians who so recently were Pagans. Bishop Ambrose, of Milan, was one of the most virulent Jew-haters in history. Little probability was there of *his* introducing Semitic tones when he adopted the Oriental methods of church vocalisation. The great Gregory was certainly a wider-souled teacher, yet he would not consciously have “judaised.” The use of music in the Church grew up gradually and it is only to be expected that it was affected by local considerations rather than by Semitic—and therefore foreign—traditions.

There is no need to assume that enharmonic scales never

existed in ancient Jewry, because the relics yet preserved of the ancient songs have intervals diatonic or chromatic only. Eastern Jews have been affected by the undiatonic intervals of the Perso-Arab song; and quite to the same extent have European Jews had their ears accustomed, and consequently their voices tuned, to European intervals.

The melodies of the cantillation consist simply of the florid cadences associated with the individual accents blended in a fluent sequence. Their recurrence is wholly dependent upon the syntactical structure of the sentence, which thus determines the chant itself, since the accents are but the notation of its individual elements. When measured verse in rhythmical form found its way into the synagogal ritual after the ninth century, the door was opened for the use of measured music. This, I think, exhausts the points raised by Sir John Stainer.

Rev. C. R. TAYLOR.—May I ask what the lecturer thinks of the association by the commentators of the title *Gittith* with the city Gath, and so of the Psalm with the fall of Goliath; and also what interpretation he favours for the word *Selah* in the Psalms? Were the accompaniments played with the illustrations traditional or modern? I have been extremely interested in the whole lecture.

Mr. COHEN.—*Gittith* literally means "proceeding from Gath." But *Gath* as well as being the name of a city, is the Hebrew for "winepress." Some, therefore, have considered *Gittith* to be the name of an instrument of the guitar class shaped like a winepress. I take the word, consistently with my theory, to be the name of a scale-form derived from the city of Gath. "*Selah*" has a host of interpretations; the traditional one, which appears in the Targum, is "for ever." Others take the Hebrew letters which spell the word—S, L, H—as initials of three words denoting *da capo*. Others connect it with the verb "to raise," and take it to mean an ascending passage, or a *crescendo*. But as the Talmud relates that a short symphony or *ritornello* was played between the chanting of each section of the daily Psalm, I hold with those who interpret "*Selah*" as "pause for instrumental interlude." No instrumental accompaniment of any kind has been traditionally in use in the Synagogue. Those given with the illustrations this evening are almost all arrangements I have myself attempted.

Mr. WEBER.—Our lecturer derives Jewish music from the Greeks. I think the Hebrews were earlier in their music than the Greeks. He did not seem to make a difference between the Shophar and the silver trumpets. The Shophar could be blown by anyone, but the silver trumpets were in the hands of the priests alone.

Mr. COHEN.—The last speaker forgets I discussed the

music not of Biblical but of post-Biblical times, and that Greek music was of origin cognate with the Oriental Syrian, from which the Jewish descends. The Shophar you have seen this evening; the silver trumpets exist only in effigy.

The CHIEF RABBI.—Allow me to express my extreme gratification with what I have listened to to-night, to the very fascinating lecture of our friend Mr. Cohen, and also to bear testimony to this point—that in her singing of the music of the Synagogue Mrs. Cohen did in no way embellish it, but rendered it with faithful and perfect fidelity. I would add that Mr. Cohen has in no way exhausted the subject in his illustrations. He has only touched the fringe of it, and there is ample material for him to delight you with on another occasion.

The meeting concluded with cordial votes of thanks to the Lecturer and Mrs. Cohen.