

Jews and Sufis: Shared Musical Traditions

Featured Scholar
Edwin Seroussi

Panelists
Edwin Seroussi Robert Labaree Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

Musical Director
Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol

The Dünya Ensemble
Robert Labaree/çeng, percussion, voice, **Panayotis League**/kemençe, voice,
Cem Mutlu/percussion, voice, **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**/ ud, ney, voice,
and **Noam Sender**/ney, voice

PROGRAM

PART I. THE OTTOMAN-JEWISH MUSICAL LEGACY

Since at least the 16th century, the *maftirim* repertoire--Hebrew devotional poetry (*piyyutim*) set to Ottoman/Turkish *makam* music for use in the synagogue--has demonstrated the close and continuing relationship Jews established with members of Muslim mystical brotherhoods in the Ottoman regions. Some of these Sufi groups were also viewed as heterodox religious minorities by the Muslim mainstream. Unlike its Ottoman counterparts, *maftirim* is an *a capella* choral tradition, due to the banning of musical instruments in the synagogue on Sabbaths and Holy Days. The *piyyutim* are set either to music newly composed in the Ottoman/Turkish style by Jewish composers, or to melodies of secular Ottoman court music and Sufi devotional music. For our own time, the *maftirim* phenomenon may also provide models for how religious minorities can thrive and enrich each other within otherwise alien environments. Following standard *maftirim* practice, this first set features unaccompanied men's voices, grouped by *makam*, Ottoman/Turkish melodic mode.

Vocal Taksim (improvisation) **in Hebrew** – Psalms 69:31, Jeremiah 16:19 and Judges 5:3

Ahal'la shem Elohim be'shir va'agadelenu be'toda

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving

Adonay uzi uma'uzi um'nusi beyom tzara

Oh Lord, my strength, and my stronghold, and my refuge in the day of affliction

Shim'u melachim ha'azinu rozenim anochi lashem anochi ashirah

Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; I will sing to the Lord; I will intone a melody

Ya'elam Shavani Text: Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625), Music: Avtalyon ben Mordechai (17th c.)
Makam: Hüseyini, Usul: Muhammes

*Ya'elam shavani ne'elam zemani / Matay shav ani el moshav iram / Shur tsur Israel binkha eved
El/ Aluf magdiel / Ve-aluf iram - Ana el li ha'azen*

I was captured by Ya'elam (a son of Esau, i.e. a symbol of the Christians) / My history came to an end / And when I return to their areas of settlement (of the Christians) / Watch Rock of Israel your son enslaved / by the chiefs of Magdiel and Iram (i.e. the leaders of the Christian tribes) / God, please listen to me!

El Shelah Et Tishbi Text: Anonymous, Music: Avtalyon ben Mordechai
Makam: Isfahan, Usul: Yürük Semai
El shelah et Tishbi / Behol beti hu neeman / Tamun hu behubbi / Le-Yisrael sham mezumman
God, send the Tishbite / "He is trusted throughout my household" / He is hidden in my bosom /
For Israel he is invited there

Kezerem Kabbir Text: Rabbi Abraham Papo (20th c.), Music: Moshe Cordova (1881-1965), Makam: Hicaz, Usul: Sengin Semai
Kezerem kabbir sa'ar katev / Shotsef bahurim beza'am ve-evra / Menudde ofel middam harev / Litmon bahorim bematsok vetsara
As a mighty stream in a destructive storm / carries away young men in fury and rage / An outcast, darkened by the blood of a sword / was to hide in holes of distress and oppression

Hadesh Kecedem Text and possibly music by Haim Aboab (19th c.)
Makam: Hicaz, Usul: Yürük Semai
Hadesh kekedem yameinu shokhen zevula / Lishkon kavod be-artseinu na'avah tehila / Yarum venisah karneinu me'od nahahla / Navo el menukhateinu el ha-nakhala.
May the one who dwells on high renew our days once more / and may the presence to which all praise is due rest upon the earth in glory / May the one who dwells on high raise us to the highest peaks and bring us to the rest and the inheritance we seek.

PART II. BEKTAŞI SUFIS AND MAFTIRIM

The close relationships between Jewish and Muslim mystics in the Ottoman world are especially visible in the musical connections with the Mevlevi and Bektaşı Sufi orders. This part of our program is based on the relationship of the maftirim repertoire with that of the Bektaşı dervishes, a heterodox form of mystical Islam with strong Shiite tendencies. In this set we include instrumental music along with Hebrew poetry adapted to pre-existing Bektaşı hymns (commonly referred to as *nefes*, lit. "breath"). We have interspersed some of these Hebrew pieces with a number of Bektaşı nefes in Turkish, linking them through their common melodic modes (makam) and rhythmic cycles (usul).

Taksim (improvisation) in Hüseyini Makam

Shakhar Avak'shekha - a piyyut by Shelomo Ben Yehuda Ibn Gevirol (1021-1058) adapted by Noam Sender using the music of a Bektaşı Hüseyini nefes.

Makam: Hüseyini, Usul: Ağır Düyek

Shahar avak'shekha tsuri u'misgavi, e'erokh le'fanekha shahri vegam arvi. Lifney gedulat'kha e'emod ve'ebahel, ki ei'nekha tir'eh kol makh'shavot libi. Ma ze asher yu'khal halev ve'halashon la'asot, u'ma ko'ah ru'hi be'tokh kirbi. Hineh lekha ti'tav zimrat enosh, al ken odekha be'od nishmat Eloha bi.

At dawn I seek you, Refuge Rock sublime; My morning prayers I offer, and those at evening time. I tremble in Your awesome Presence, contrite, For my deepest secrets lie stripped before Your sight. My tongue, what can I say? My heart, what can I do? What is my strength, what is my spirit too? But should music be sweet to You in mortal key, Your praises I sing so long as breath's in me.

Yesha El Hay Tohil Text: Israel Najara, Music: Anonymous
and

Gel Gönül Sabreyle Text: Pir Sultan Abdal (ca. 1480-1550), Music: Anonymous
Makam: Uşşak, Usul: Curcuna

The text of the first maftirim song here is a piyyut by Israel Najara which the poet intended it to be sung to the melody of the following Bektaşı poem by Pir Sultan Abdal well known during his time. Since the early 16th century Bektaşı melody of this particular poem has been lost. Noam Sender has adapted the poem by Najara to a melody used nowadays for a different Bektaşı nefes that follows the same syllabic structure. To the same melody, Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol has adapted the original Bektaşı poem by Pir Sultan Abdal as well.

Yesha el hay tohil lev soled behil Living God provide deliverance to an exulting heart
Ki od el hay eliyon yateh al tziyon The Heavenly Living God will still favor Zion
Lev nishbar venidka pedut el hakeh Broken and dismayed heart, expect heavenly redemption
Lev ashuk veratzutz od tashuv lasus Weary and exhausted heart, you shall rejoice again!

Gel gönül sabreyle katlan bu cevre O my heart, be patient and bear this pain
Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day
Niceleri kondu göçtü bu hane So many came to, and left this inn
Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day

Mehullal Shem Text: Anonymous, Music: Behor Mevorah (early 20th c.)
Makam: Uşşak, Usul: Katikofti

and

İnsan Derler idi Text and Music: Anonymous
Makam: Hüseyini, Usul: Katikofti

A piyyut from the maftirim repertoire alternates in dialogue with a Turkish Bektaşî nefes using the same usul (rhythmic cycle). The similar structure and makam (mode) of the two songs suggest that they draw upon the same musical models.

Mehullal shem Adonay ki asa itti pela'oth / Ba'u alay ra'oth rabboth / Delakuni velo mesa'uni
Praised be the name of A, for he did wonders for me / Many evils have come upon me / They
have pursued me, but did not affect me

İnsan insan derler idi There was a talk about man
İnsan nedir şimdi bildim I now understand what man is
Can deyu söylerler idi And they talked about soul
Bu can nedir şimdi bildim I now know what soul is

Nefes in Hüseyini Makam - Text: Şemsi (1795-1884), Music: Anonymous, Usul: Sofyan
Mescit ile medreseyi The mosque and the medrese
Ismarladık zahitlere We'll gladly give them to the ascetics
Hakka ibadet etmeğe To pray to God
Yeter bize meyhaneler The tavern is enough for us

PART III. MEVLEVİ SUFIS AND MAFTIRIM

In the maftirim tradition it is common to find piyyutim by well-known Jewish poets set to instrumental compositions by members of the *Mevlevi* dervish order, known in the West as the "whirling dervishes". This final set offers examples of well-known Mevlevi music in dialogue with examples from the maftirim repertoire, as well as other instrumental and vocal examples that can be associated with this order.

Taksim (improvisation) in Bestenigar Makam

Ani Be-Rov Hasdekha Text: Aharon Hamon (d. 1721), Music: *Bestenigar peşrev* by Dimitri Kantemir (1673-1723), Makam: Bestenigar, Usul: Berevşan

The text of this maftirim song here is an excerpt from a piyyut (by Aharon Hamon) which the poet intended it to be sung to the melody of the *Bestenigar peşrev* by Dimitri Kantemir well known during his time. Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol adapted this particular excerpt to a part of the Bestenigar peşrev.

Ani berov hasdekha e'erokh levadakh / kol drakhai negdekha sameah nefesh avdakh

I, for all your grace, shall set only for you / all my deeds, happy is the soul of your servant

Perde Kaldırma and **Kaside** (modulatory improvisations and a vocal improvisation in Turkish)

Yeheme Levavi Biroti Text: Israel Najara, Music: Neyzen Yusuf Paşa

and

Peşrev in Segah Makam Music: Neyzen Yusuf Paşa (1821-1884), Usul: Devr-i Kebir

Yeheme levavi biroti, tsari yiltosh einav negdi / Shinav yakharok gam yisaar, lehafitz hamon gdudi / Hish aneni Noraot, Elohei ha'Tsva'ot / Ad matai ketz pla'ot, esmah yagel kvodi / Shama le-shama samani, vegila avnei yesodi / Omar amar levale'a, ir nahalat tzvi hodi / Haletz na eved shadud, yartiah ke-sir vadud / Tsur bekha arutz gdud, lakh azamer be'odi.

My heart fills with terror, when my enemy stares at me. Gnashing teeth, working up a storm to scatter my companions. Lord of hosts, I beg, respond swiftly with your awesome miracles. How long must I wait for them? How long for that joy and glory? My enemy destroyed me, till the foundations were laid bare and will bring down the glorious city that I long for. I cry out for redemption, a tormented slave, burning in his pain You are my strength; with you I can defeat an army, My song is for you as long as I live.

Niyaz Ayini in Segah Makam - Text and Music: Anonymous
and

Yismah Har Tsiyyon Text: Yehuda (anonymous, perhaps Yehuda Benaroya, late 19th century),
Music: Anonymous, Usul: Yürük Semai

A Jewish maftirim song alternates in a dialogue with the shortened version of a Turkish Mevlevi ayin (ceremony) music using the same usul (rhythmic cycle), only from the second part of the Mevlevi ayin. The makam (mode) and the similar melodic structure of the two pieces suggest that they most likely draw from a common ancestor.

Dinle sözümü sana derim özge edadır / Derviş olana lazım olan aşkı Hüdadır / Aşıkın nesi var ise Maşuka fedadır / Sema safa cana şifa ruha gıdadır

Listen to what I am saying, it is about another way / What a dervish needs is the love of God / Whatever the lover possesses is sacrificed for the Beloved / The sema is joy, and it is good for body and soul

Yismah har Tsiyyon ve-tagelna benoth Yehuda / U-shkhon bekirbah ki Atta Eli titten odah

Let Mount Zion rejoice and the towns of Judah exalt / Dwell in her midst, for it is You, my God, who grants glory to her

Dr. Edwin Seroussi is the Emanuel Alexandre Professor of Musicology, Head of the School of the Arts and Director of the Jewish Music Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was born in Montevideo, Uruguay and immigrated to Israel in 1971. In the past, he held lectureships at the Department of Musicology of Tel-Aviv University, Levinsky Teachers' College in Tel-Aviv, and Bar-Ilan University in 1990, where he was head of the Department of Music from 1994 to 1998. He has also held visiting professor positions at several USA and European universities. Dr. Seroussi is a recognized authority on the musical interactions between Muslims and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. He has published many works on diverse aspects of Sephardic music traditions, as well as popular music in Israel.