

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4205



GREEK-JEWISH MUSICAL TRADITIONS

Recording and Notes by Amnon Shiloah, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem



PAROCHET, SYNAGOGUE IN MACHANEH, JEHUDA, PHOTO BY RICARDA SCHWERIN

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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MUSIC LP

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4205

SIDE 1

1. "Psalm 93" sung on Friday's evening service (Joanina) 2:00
2. "The day of Sabbat" A Sabbatical hymn (Corfu) 1:45
3. "There is nothing like the Sabbat" A Sabbatical hymn (Larissa) 2:50
4. "Buena Semnan" (sung in Judeo-Spanish on Saturday evening) (Salonica) 1:50
5. "I got up early" - A penitential Prayer (Joanina) 2:30
6. "Little Sister" - Hymn for the New Year (Chalkis) 1:05
7. "Time to the gates of Salvation to open" - id (Larissa) 3:08
8. "With a feeling of humility" - Expiations day (Salonica) 2:00
9. "Keter" - Sanctification for Expiations day (Corfu) 3:10
10. "No Mighty but God" - a purim hymn (Chalkis) 1:05
11. "Purim Purim - a purim hymn (Chalkis) 1:16
12. Un Cabrecito - A Pessah Song - Larissa 0:50
13. Moses and Pharoah - A Pessah Song (Salonia) 1:30

SIDE 2

1. I thank you for having listened to me - hymn for Pessah (Volos) 2:32
2. Bless be this dey - Pentecote (Joanina) 1:05
3. Alavar Alavaremos - Circumcision (Larissa) 3:30
4. Hymn for the Circumcision Ceremony (Corfu) 1:30
5. Excerpts from a circumcision ceremony (Athens) 2:30
6. Torala y Pulia - a wedding song - Joanina 2:20
7. Si tu me querias - a wedding song (Larissa) 1:40
8. La Novia (a wedding song (Salonica) 1:45
9. El Rey de Franlia - A Romanza (Salonica) 2:10
10. La vaba la niña blanca "A Romanza (Salonica) 2:10
11. Mañana y Mañana - A Cradle Son (Larissa) 5:00

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Recording and Notes by
Amnon Shiloah,
The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Master tape prepared in the electronic studio of the Hebrew University, by J. Siles.

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The history of the Jews in Greece goes back to the biblical period, but the earliest evidence about Jews on the Greek mainland dates only to the third century B.C. Throughout this long history many different regimes have ruled over Greece and have left their trace on Jewish life and culture. As a result of the several waves of Jewish emigration to Greece from different European countries, at least three major traditions may be distinguished in the Greek-Jewish heritage.

The first and oldest tradition is that of the Greek-speaking Jews known as the Romaniots (Gregos). Writing about this group, Benjamin of Tudela, the 12th century traveler, says that in his time there were Jews in Corfu, Ioanina, Arta, Patras, Chalkis, Salonika, Thebes and Aphilon. With the arrival of the Spanish refugees in the XVth century the hegemony and the homogeneity of the Romaniots were perturbed. However, in spite of the overwhelming influence of the Sepharadi newcomers, the Romaniot tradition of the Byzantine period has survived, notably in Ioanina, Arta, Patras, Chalkis and Crete.

With the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula in 1492, one wave of exiles spread over the Ottoman empire and soon established several flourishing centers in Northern Greece, mainly that in Salonika which at its height, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was known for its cultural pre-eminence as well as for its rich economic resources. In Salonika, Trikala, Larissa and Volos, the Sephardi Jews introduced their own customs and their language, the Judeo-Spanish; the different groups also established synagogues of their own patterned after those left behind in the Iberian peninsula. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the population of this group increased with the influx of Spanish Marranos.

The third tradition is that of the Italian-speaking Jews whose ancestors were expelled from Apulia in southern Italy. This tradition is evident in the isle of Corfu and its neighbouring centers.

The events of World War II dealt a decisive blow to the long and rich history of Greek Jewry; out of over 100,000 souls only 10,000 survived the Holocaust. Many flourishing communities disappeared forever.

II

In the summer of 1970, when I undertook a field trip to Greece, I found only tiny scattered communities, some not exceeding 200 individuals, struggling to maintain their dying traditions. In almost each of the eight communities visited I found only one surviving reliable informant who had a good knowledge of the tradition. The members of these communities were aware of the situation but of course could not reverse it. An internal migration toward the relatively larger centers, Athens and Salonika, has unavoidably occurred.

In the course of my six-week field trip I collected musical

documents in the following centers: Athens, Chalkis, Corfu, Ioanina, Larissa, Salonika, Trikala and Volos. I tried to systematically record the local musical traditions, encompassing the synagogal, paraliturgical and secular music. The result of more than twenty hours of recording including prayers, biblical chants, hymns and domestic songs covering all the events in a man's life. These documents are in Hebrew, Greek, Judeo-Greek and Judeo-Spanish. A few are bilingual. I believe that they offer a panorama of the multiple musical traditions of the Greek Jewry, although perhaps not of its highest achievements.

In this selection I have attempted to reflect the cycles of the liturgical year and of human existence, as well as the complex of the different musical traditions. I begin with four Sabbath songs belonging to four different traditions, including one in Judeo-Spanish (A,4). These are followed by eleven hymns and songs representing different feasts and diverse communities, including three bilingual examples, one in Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish (A, 7, 8), as well as two Passover folk songs in Judeo-Spanish (A,12,13). The songs on B,3-8 represent samples from the repertoire of circumcision and wedding songs and the last three items on side B attempt to illustrate the beautiful Judeo-Spanish Romancero. My field trip was sponsored by the Jewish Music Research Center and generously supported by the Central board of the Greek Jewish communities to whom I wish to express my heartiest thanks.

One striking fact emerges from this selection, namely the total absence of any instrumental music or any instrumental accompaniment. This is not due to any particular cultural impoverishment of Greek Jewry; it seems that even in the past non-Jewish instrumentalists were usually hired to enhance family rejoicings. The nature of the vocal examples included in this selection reflects the differences among the three groups described above. Three musical styles can be distinguished: the earlier Byzantine (Romaniot), the Sephardi (Judeo-Spanish) and the Italian or Pugghiesi (from Salento in Apulia-Puglia). In all three styles there are further basic differences between synagogal music and secular songs and to a lesser degree between men's and women's singing and repertory. The men's style, especially in the synagogal traditions of the Sephardis and the Romaniots, is characterized by a nasalizing intonation, a parlando-rubato and a nostalgic-plaintive rendition; it is strongly melismatic and mostly soloist. Generally speaking it denotes the influence of both Turkish and the New Byzantine church music. Some secular and women's songs are performed in a similar way but usually the domestic repertoire is less charged and more limpid. It is noteworthy that the women were also assigned the singing of paraliturgic hymns and some of them achieved mastery in the performance of solo synagogal pieces, imitating the art of the *hazzan* (the precentor). Such is the case for instance of Anna Raphael from Ioanina who sings a wedding song in Greek in this selection (see B,6).

Band 1. Adonay malakh

The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty (Ps. 93), Ioanina tradition, sung by the congregation of the Ioanina synagogue in Jerusalem. This psalm is part of the Friday evening opening service, called *kabbalat shabbat* (the welcoming of the Sabbath). This psalm, usually performed as a simple cantillation by other communities, is rendered in Ioanina as a solemn hymn in which the poetical division is marked by long notes. At the end of the phrase a second voice joins in, singing an upper third (see ex. 1). More elaborate part singing occurs in other pieces of the same service.

by Hayyim Menahem. This is one of the numerous hymns glorifying the Sabbath which became popular as domestic songs. These hymns, known as *zemirot*, are sung at the Friday evening, Sabbath noon and Sabbath afternoon meals. The melody as well as the manner of performance are typical of the Corfu style.

Band 3. Yom shabbat ein kamohu. The Sabbath day is unique. Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

This is another hymn belonging to the group described in the previous item; it has a plaintive and melismatic melody. The Larissa tradition is closely related to that of the Sephardi center in Salonika.

Ex. 1
♩ = 54

A-do ney ma lakh q-ut La- vesh La- vesh A-do-nay'os hit a zar af ti-kante vel
Bal-bi mot ma-Khan Kis-a Kha-me-as me'o la-ma
ta ma ou na-ha-rot a-do nay na-se-ou ne-ha-
ro t ko Lam yit-ou ne-ha-rot do... Kham

Band 4. El Dio Alto—God most high. Salonika tradition, sung by H. Sidis.

This is one of a group of songs for the outgoing of the Sabbath, dominated by the figure of the prophet Elijah who became the legendary guardian of Israel, symbolizing its hope of salvation. Messianic hopes intermingle with another topic—wishes for a good week. The link between the two is provided by a kabbalistic concept considering the Sabbath as a minor salvation. The melody has a cheerful march character (see ex. 2).

Band 5. Kamti be-ashmoret—I got up at dawn. Ioanina tradition, sung by H. Borbolis. After the Sabbath, which occupies an important place in the musical traditions of all these communities, we now proceed to some examples representing the cycle of the liturgical year. A month before the Jewish New Year, oriental and Sephardi communities gather at dawn to celebrate the penitential ceremony (selihot). *Kamti be-ashmoret* is an opening hymn whose slow and melismatic melody is performed in a nostalgic and plaintive manner, breathing a feeling of resignation. Many hymns for the holidays are pervaded by the same atmosphere.

Ex. 2
♩ = 112

Eus-mos se-ma nas ve mos ve mi Pa-ra que nos de xe d do
be-a hi a nos ya to do i
ste el el Dio a p-to con su-gra

Band 6. Ahot ketana—Little sister. Chalkis tradition, sung by M. Cohen. This hymn, which inaugurates the New Year's eve service has the following refrain: "May a year end with its maledictions"; in the last stanza this refrain changes into: "May the year begin with its benedictions." The melody, in the hidjaz, or chromatic mode, has a relatively wide range and displays a dramatic nature.

Band 7. Et sha'are ratzon—A moment of grace. Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

This hymn marks one of the highest moments of the New Year's celebrations; it concerns the story of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac and it is sung immediately before the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) which for most people has magical and mystical connotations. Fear, reverence, mercy and hope are expressed in the performance of the hymn, which is particularly favoured by precentors and worshippers. It is usually sung both in Hebrew and in the translated Judeo-Spanish version.

Band 8. Et sha'are ratzon—A moment of grace. Salonika tradition, sung by Leon Parahia.

This is an excerpt from the version translated into Judeo-Spanish. We include it here to show the widespread veneration for this hymn.

Band 9. Keter—The Trisagion, for the Day of Atonement. Corfu tradition, sung by H. Menahem.

The singing of the *kedusha* (*keter*) or the Trisagion from Isaiah VI : 3 : "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts" is connected to the kabbalistic concept that the *kedusha* achieves its full effectiveness only when it is sung in parallel chant by the people of Israel and the angels on high. This concept offered an impetus for the enhancement of the musical significance of the prayer, and it became a favoured piece for compositions by the precentors. The version given here (see ex. 3) was designed by the informant as "polaco" (of Polish origin).

Ex. 3

$\text{♩} = 85$

Ku - tor ji - te - mu le - kha A - do - nay e - lo - hay nu mal - a - khim ha mo - nei
 me' - la' um 'am - kha ye - ra - el Ke Yu tze na ta Zeked Ku Lam kedos sha la Kha - ge - shak -
 shu ka - da - var he - a mur el yad ne - bia kha ve - ka - za - ze el - ze ve
 a mar Ka - dash Ka - dash Ka - dash A - do - nay ze va - ot
 me - lo Kol ha - a - ratz Ke - vo - do

Band 10. Ein addir kadonay—There is none mightier than God. Hymn for the feast of the rejoicing of the Torah, Chalkis tradition, sung by M. Cohen.

The plain melody of this hymn is in the ancient Greek national mode—the Dorian. It is a further bilingual example (see above 7,8), but here the translation is Judeo-Greek (see ex. 4).

Ex. 4

$\text{♩} = 96$

Ein a di Ka - do - nay ve ein ba nakh Ke - ven 'a - ram ve
 ein ke va dah Ka - to - zeh ve ein ba - go - yim Ke - yeh - ra el
 mi - pi el mi - ti pi el ye - vo - nakh Kol yei - ra el

Band 11. Purim purim—Song for the carnival feast of Purim. Chalkis tradition, sung by M. Cohen.

As in the previous item, the melody is in the ancient Dorian mode. The informant claimed that the two melodies were the same, although there are obvious differences (see ex. 5).

Band 12. Had gadya—The song of the kid. A *Haggadah* song in Judeo-Spanish, Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

At the end of the *Haggadah*—the order of the family service on Passover night—two songs are included which belong to the category that is with a text containing repeated enumeration, each repetition acquiring a new addition. Had gadya is one of these songs.

Band 13. Llamolo a Mose—He called on Moses. A romance for Passover. Salonika tradition, sung by H. Sidis.

Several Jewish romances were dedicated to the leading figure of Moses, making use of elements from ancient legends and the homelitic literature about the major events of his life. These romances are performed at Passover. The romance of which an excerpt is included here begins with the call to Moses from the burning bush and concludes with the story of the exodus. This romance originally contained numerous verses, but the surviving versions are all incomplete and defective.

Ex. 5

$\text{♩} = 76$

Musical score for Ex. 5, featuring three staves of music in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 76$. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are:
 Pu ri m pu ri m Au ri m la nu ba nu kh
 a she be ha ta nu pu ri m pu ri m
 pu ri m la nu ba nu kh a she be ha nu

SIDE B

Band 1. Odekha ki 'anitani—I thank thee that thou has answered me (Ps. 118), part of the *Hallel* for Passover, Volos tradition, sung by J. Vital. In this hymn of praise the style of

singing as well as the melodic material shows the influence of Italian music and the bel canto style (see ex. 6). The Volos tradition is now closely related to that of Corfu.

Ex. 6

$\text{♩} = 94$

Musical score for Ex. 6, featuring two staves of music in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 94$. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are:
 o-de-kha ki a-ni-ta-ni va-te-ki li li-shu-ah o-de-kha-ki-a-ni
 ta ni va-te-ki li li-shu-ah etc...
 e-ren

Band 2. Amon yom ze—Glorified is this day. Hymn for the Pentecost, Ioanina tradition, sung by H. Borbolis.

This hymn belongs to the *azharot*, a group of hymns glorifying the promulgation of the Torah which, it is believed, took place on that day. The feast also has an agricultural significance since it is considered as the feast of first fruits.

Band 3. Alavar alavaremos—A circumcision song in Judeo-Spanish, Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

This song opens the series of examples illustrating the life cycle. Two important events offer an occasion for particular rejoicings which are enhanced by appropriate songs and dances. The first of those is the circumcision ceremony, usually held on the eighth day following the birth of a boy.

Band 4. Yerusha nahalah—A circumcision hymn, Corfu tradition, sung by H. Menahem.

In the ceremonial part of the circumcision, all the hymns and prayers are in Hebrew. The hymn given here is particular to the Corfu tradition. In the course of the rejoicings other songs, in the vernacular, might be heard.

Band 5. Excerpt from a circumcision ceremony recorded in Athens.

When I was in Athens the occasion occurred of recording an actual circumcision ceremony. These excerpts offer vivid echoes of the most important moments of the ceremony, the chanting of the benedictions, the cry of the baby and the tumult of the participants.

Band 6. Tora ta pulia—When the nuptial ceremony is finished. A wedding song in Greek, Ioanina tradition, sung by Anna Raphael.

The Romaniots in Ioanina, in addition to the Hebrew ceremonial hymns, possess an entire repertoire of wedding songs in Greek which present similarities with the old indigenous musical tradition. The rendition of these songs, which mostly belong to the chromatic mode, is characterized by a hard and sad form. The informant Anna Raphael who also provided me with many synagogal chants, is one of the rare women still to know the very ancient tradition of funeral lamentations.

Band 7. Si tu me quierias como yo tu quiero—If you only wanted me as I want you. A wedding song in Judeo-Spanish, Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

Many Judeo-Spanish songs mark and enhance the different stages such as the betrothal, the procession of the bride to the bath, the farewell evening in the bride's house held on the last outgoing Sabbath preceding the wedding, the procession of the bride to the bridegroom's house and the eight days of rejoicing which follow the nuptial ceremony during which the new couple is said to remain at home.

Band 8. Cante de novia—Song for the bride. A wedding song, Salonika tradition, sung by H. Sidis.

One of the numerous women's wedding songs.

Band 9. El Rey de Francia tres hijas tenia—The king of France had three daughters. A romance, Salonika tradition, sung by Allegra Matarasso.

The last three items of this selection are samples from the Judeo-Spanish Romancero which preserves old castilian ballads brought by Jews to their new homes after the expulsion from Spain in 1492. The romance tells the story of the three daughters of the king of France and the fate of the love of the youngest.

Band 10. Lavaba la blanca nina—The pure maiden washes. A romance, Salonika tradition, sung by H. Sidis.

While she is washing and weeping, the disguised husband of the pure maiden passes and asks her to give him water. At his remarks she relates her sorrow caused by the disappearance of her husband who has gone to war. He is dead, avers the disguised knight, and asks for her hand but she refuses. Finally he reveals his true identity and they both enjoy the happiness of their meeting (see ex. 7).

Part of the text:

The pure maiden washed
she washed and hung up
with tears she washed
with sighs she collected.
A knight passed there
a little water asked from her.
From the tears of her eyes
six jugs she filled.

—Why are you crying my siñora
Why do you have to cry?

—My husband went to war
and so far has not returned.

—Give me a sign my siñora
a sign of your husband

—He is tall as a pine

straight as an arrow

he has reddish beard

which has only begun to grow...

Band 11. Mañana y mañana—Morning at morning. A romance, Larissa tradition, sung by A. Negrin.

This fragmentary romance tells the story of a man's love for a nun. Like many other romances it was used as a cradle song.

Ex. 7
♩ = 56

La va la blan Ca ni ña la - va - ba y - s Pa - n di - ia
con lag - ri - mas La la - va ba con - ses Pi ras lo co
- ji - ia