India is known as a land of varied cultures and great diversity. This is reflected in its music as in all parts of its culture. The classical Hindustani and Karnatik music are known throughout the world, but the myriad devotional, folk and popular genres are too numerous to be known. Not only are there at least four major linguistic families, with accompanying cultures and traditions, but a history of the numerous migrations and trade contacts through the centuries have enriched the musical and performance traditions. These challenge our definition of what we can call Indian music or the music of India!

The Remembered Rhythms festival was a modest attempt to showcase some of this diversity against the backdrop of diaspora and music. Music is one of the most evocative elements in which culture is preserved, remembered, transmitted and transformed.

Three groups from three diasporic communities — The Sidi Goma representing the African Sidi community of Gujarat in India, D’Bhikaa Saa, a chauney group of the East Indian community from Trinidad and Rivers of Babylon, a London based group who perform the music of the Baghdadi and Bene Israeli Jewish communities of India participated in this event. Each group was accompanied by an ethnomusicologist who explained and contextualised the music for the audiences.

These CDs bring together the excitement of the tour as three groups with varying and exciting music toured seven cities at the same time crossing the country, reviving their memories and roots for themselves as well as the audiences.

For further information on the groups, the tour of India, visit www.musicdiapora.org. CDs can be ordered either from the website, or by writing to remembered_rhythms@yahoo.com.

Remembered Rhythms Project Director: Shubha Chaudhuri
Remembered Rhythms
Rivers of Babylon Live in India

All music recorded in India during February 2005 as part of the Remembered Rhythms Festival of diaspora and the music of India. Celebrating the diverse diasporic cultures and music within India and of the Indian diaspora abroad, this festival brought three groups of performers to the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

From Trinidad came O’Buye Saaj performing music of the East Indian community of the Caribbean. Sidi Goma performed music of the Sidi African community of Gujarat. Rivers of Babylon performed music of the Iraqi Jewish and Bene Israeli communities of India.

This CD features live recordings of Iraqi Jewish and Bene Israeli music performed by the London based group Rivers of Babylon.

The festival was conceived and organised by the Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology of the American Institute of Indian Studies with support from the Ford Foundation.

Tracks
1. Yéhi Shalom Béhélénu (Let There be Peace in our Midst), 3:40
2. Muqaddima Hijáz (Instrumental), 02:43
3. Kl Eshmérah Shabbath (Because I Keep the Sabbath) / Balini-b Balwa (He’s a Plague on Me), 04:45
4. Siméni Rosh ‘Al Kol Oybay (Place Me Above All My Foes), 05:33
5. Yom Hashshabbath (The Sabbath Day), 02:40
6. El Elíyahu (Lord of Elijah), 03:23
7. Elíyahu Hannabé (Elijah, the Prophet), 04:26
8. Sinai Sinai Ayyéh Moshé / Sinai Dongrawar Moshélá (Sinai, Sinai, Where Is Moses? / Moses, Upon Mount Sinai), 06:12
9. Émeth Ata Hathánénú (Truly, You are Our Bridegroom), 03:55
10. Ya Nábi (On Prophet), 02:51
11. Longa Nahawand (Instrumental), 03:11
12. Méra Joota Hai Jaapaane – Phir Bhi Dil hai Hindustani (My Shoes are Japanese — Still My Heart is Indian), 03:38

Members of Rivers of Babylon in the Remembered Rhythms Tour of India:

Sara Manasseh Leader, Vocals, Dumbuk (Drum)
Ahmed Abd Alrahman ‘Oud (Middle–Eastern Lute)
Solomon Elías Mandolin (Pune and Mumbai Concerts, Only)
Abe Hayeem Vocals, Tambourine
Saed Nathan Drums, Bedouin and Indian Pipes, Sba’én (Finger Clicks)
Peter Shade Accordion
Barry Solomon Oboe, Cor Anglais, Vocals
Edward Solomon Vocals
Pamela Solomon Vocals
Solly Solomon Vocals
Susan Verney Violin
REMEMBERED RHYTHMS
RIVERS OF BABYLON LIVE IN INDIA

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Susan Verney Violin
JEWISH DIASPORA IN INDIA

Historically, there have been three established communities of Jews in India—the Cochin Jews, the Bene Israel (lit. “Children of Israel”), and the Baghdad Jews.

The largest, and possibly the oldest of these three communities is the Bene Israel. According to legend, this group first settled in the Konkan coast of Maharashtra as long ago as 175 BCE after their ship sank, taking all their religious books and belongings with them. Despite this loss and centuries of no links with other Jewish communities, they maintained the Jewish Sabbath, dietary laws, and many festivals. Long interaction with surrounding communities led them to adopt Marathi and local ways of life.

The smallest community of Jews in India are the Jews of Cochin in Kerala. Though their ancestors are thought to have arrived in the tenth century BCE, during King Solomon’s time, the earliest evidence of Jews in Kerala dates from at least 1000 CE. The initial group of Jews, known as “Malabari Jews,” were joined by a number of European Jews known as “Pardesi” Jews in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The most recent Jewish group to settle in India were the Baghdadi Jews. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Jewish merchants from the Middle East and Central Asia settled in India, in the growing cities of British India principally Bombay, Calcutta, and Poona. While mainly from Baghdad and thus known as Baghdadi, Babylonian or Iraqi Jews this community includes Jews from Basra and Amara, Syria, Aden, Iran, Bukhara, Afghanistan and other places in Central Asia. Today the Jewish communities of India have all but disappeared as most of their members have resettled mainly in Israel, the U.K., North America and Australia. Rivers of Babylon come to us from London and thus represents a triple diaspora—the original Jewish Diaspora in Iraq, a second diaspora in India, and now a third diaspora in Britain.

MUSIC OF THE JEWS OF INDIA

In the orthodox Jewish tradition, religious music is primarily vocal and not accompanied by musical instruments on Sabbaths and major festivals, since the playing of musical instruments on these days has been forbidden since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. However, for performances apart from such days of religious significance, instruments may be played. Thus, songs of the Bene Israel community, for example, may be accompanied by Indian instruments such as the sitar, harmonium, bulbularang, violin and tabla. During the twentieth century, a music school directed by Eliyahu Saatamkar provided musical training in the Indian classical tradition, on such instruments as the tabla, harmonium, sitar, flute and violin, for a number of pupils in Bombay.

The repertoire of the Bene Israel today comprises many influences including those of neighboring Hindu and Muslim communities in coastal Maharashtra and later in Mumbai. While the texts of Bene Israel prayers, in keeping with all Jewish traditions, are mainly in Hebrew with some Aramaic, they are distinguished by the fact that a large part of their song repertoire is in Marathi. The Hindu form of kirtan (religious song) through was also adopted by the Bene Israel during the nineteenth century for religious education. Bene Israel kirtan-s were “Bible stories presented in Marathi verse and sung to Hindu tunes by the kirtankar (singer) either solo or with choral and/or instrumental accompaniment” (Isenberg 1988:97), and were inspired by Marathi translations of the Bible, by American and Scottish Christian Missionaries, in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Another distinguishing feature in the customs of the Bene Israel, and perhaps unique in the Jewish world, is the gathering for a prayer service known as “Elyyahoo Hanabi” (Elijah the Prophet). Also known as malida, it is a thanksgiving ceremony, celebrating a number of auspicious events. The service consists of the singing of a pizmon (hymn) associated with Elijah the Prophet, and the readings from the Pentateuch associated with the termination of the Sabbath. A tray with five different types of offerings is prepared, and includes appropriate fruits of the tree, the earth—and aromatic herbs, to fulfill the mitzvoth (religious obligations) of reciting the customary blessings. Isenberg (1988:115) notes that the malida “has its obvious analogue in the Hindu Puja.”

In Jewish life, the synagogue and home both serve as the primary performance contexts for most of the sacred repertoire, which includes prayer chants, hymns and biblical cantillation. These are heard in the context of daily, Sabbath and festival prayer services, and for occasions marking life-cycle celebrations. The Sabbath, in the Jewish tradition is considered the most important day in the calendar, and it is not surprising that a large number of hymns have been composed for this day. Even life-cycle celebrations are especially honoured on the Sabbath.

Baghdadian Jewish life in India maintained the traditions of its mother country—today’s Iraq. There has always been a strong emphasis on learning to read the bible and recite prayers in Hebrew, also with regard to keeping the Jewish-Babylonian
Jewish Diaspora in India

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Music of the Jews of India

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pronunciation of Hebrew, the language of religious observance. Religious and cultural traditions were upheld faithfully both at home and in the houses of worship. Learned Baghdadi Jews (\u0627\u0644\u0648\u0645\u0647\u0645\u0645\u0647) (religious authorities) served the communities in Bombay and Calcutta. Beautiful synagogues were established in Bombay, Poona and Calcutta, with prayer services led by \u0639\u0647\u0645\u062f\u0631 (prayer leader, cantor), who were often from Baghdad.

In daily life, first generation emigres maintained the Judeo-Arabic Baghdad dialect to converse with one another, though in time also learnt to speak Hindustani and English. At celebrations for life cycle events, songs in Iraqi Arabic and in the Judeo-Arabic of Baghdad were performed particularly for domestic celebrations. The Baghdad tradition of the daqqaqa - a professional woman musician who played the nāqaha (small kettle-drums) and sang primarily at the pre-wedding henna ceremony - was also known in Bombay. The most famous daqqaqa in Baghdad during the 1920s, was Mas'uda alBambayyili (Mas'uda the Bombayite), who had originally emigrated from Imam to Bombay, with her parents and siblings.

Due to their relatively recent arrival in India and continued contact with West Asia, the music of the Baghdad Jews retains the languages, instruments, melodies and sounds of Baghdad. However, the musical ambience of Bombay (and of other cities, such as Calcutta, Poona) did result in musical changes in the performance of the second and third generations of this community as it drew on myriad influences ranging from Indian popular and film music, Hollywood musicals, Indian devotional music as well as Jazz, Western classical and popular music and Christian hymns.

Perhaps the most striking change in the music of Baghdad Jews in India was, in many cases, the disappearance of the "neutral" intervals created by the use of "half-flat" and "half-sharp" notes in a number of Middle Eastern melodic scales - creating, for example, the interval of the (approximate) three-quarter tone, and "neutral third" that characterises much Middle Eastern music. Particularly with later generations, these notes were often "rounded off" or replaced by the half- or full-tone as found in the standard scales of Indian and Western music. This change is also evident in musical borrowings by the Bnei Israel of religious song from the Baghdad community. There are numerous Arab melodic modes (or scales), many of them not standardised in the Arab world.

**The Music of Rivers of Babylon**

The music performed by Rivers of Babylon is primarily the religious and secular music of the Babylonian (also known as Baghdad or Iraqi) Jewish tradition: folk songs, hymns (Judeo-Arabic: shba\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645 - lit. "Praises"); sung: shba\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645) for Sabbaths, festivals and life cycle events, and Middle Eastern instrumental items. The languages of the songs range from Hebrew - in the Babylonian pronunciation - to Aramaic, Judeo-Arabic and Arabic. The melodies, composed in the melodic modes (anguâm or maqâmât) of Arab music, reflect characteristics of Iraqi folk song.

Most of the songs performed are shba\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645, the most popular type of hymn in the Jewish Babylonian tradition. Also known as pipy\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645 and a pizmonim or zim'îrakh in other Jewish traditions, shba\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645 are paraturgical, sociable songs, sung around the dinner table, during or following a festive meal, at synagogue, on pilgrimage, or other occasions. The texts are especially composed poems, of a religious nature, often expressing national troubles and hopes, and are of great beauty and literary merit.

Adapting the quantitative metres of Classical Arabic poetry, Jewish poets wrote religious and secular verse in Hebrew, where the metre relied not upon syllabic stress but upon recurring groups created by the combination of short and long syllables. It was usual for the poet's "signature" (his first name) to appear as an acrostic formed from the initial letter of each verse, as will be heard on some of the tracks on this album. The melodies are transmitted orally. As already mentioned, on Sabbaths and Festivals shba\u0641\u0627\u0646\u0647\u0645 are sung unaccompanied, the playing of musical instruments on these days has been forbidden in the orthodox Jewish tradition.

At concerts, Rivers of Babylon perform these songs accompanied by a wealth of instruments, including oud (middle-eastern lute), violin, oboe, cor anglais, mandolin, Druze and Indian pipes, accordion, keyboard and percussion – most of which were represented on the Remembered Rhythms tour of India.

It is customary to accompany joyful songs, such as those for birth and marriage, with ululations – in the Iraqi tradition, performed by women as a high-pitched kallilî. Nowadays, both men and women call out with this sound at appropriate events, as did Rivers of Babylon audiences responding enthusiastically with kallilî calls during our performances of life-cycle songs. Harking back to their Indian roots, Rivers of Babylon includes songs from the Bnei Israel Jewish tradition and vintage song from Indian films in its repertoire.

**Rivers of Babylon**

Rivers of Babylon was established in 1999 by Sara Manasseh, in response to a request for a choir specialising in Iraqi-Jewish repertoire. This London-based group specialises in the religious and secular music of the Baghdad Jewish tradition, and has performed widely in London, at cultural events, music conferences, universities and public concerts, and also on radio and television programmes.

The Remembered Rhythms tour in India was the first international event in which the group participated. Most of the group members have known each other since childhood, and were born into the Baghdad Jewish community in India (Bombay and Calcutta), meeting frequently at school, synagogue and at weekly meetings and annual camps of the Jewish youth group, Habonim ("The Builders"). Rivers of Babylon represents a cultural tradition,
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Most of the songs performed are *shabat* songs, the most popular type of hymn in the Jewish Babylonian tradition. Also known as *piyyutim* and *piyyutim* or *zemirot* in other Jewish traditions, *shabat* songs are paraturgical, sociable songs, sung around the dinner table, during or following a festive meal, or at synagogue, on pilgrimage, or other occasions. The texts are especially composed poems, of a religious nature, often expressing national troubles and hopes, and are of great beauty and literary merit.

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which was transported from Iraq to India and beyond. The group includes ethnomusicologists, architects, composers, IT consultants, a doctor, secretary, taxi driver and fire prevention officer. The Rivers of Babylon have published one CD Treasures that can be ordered from their website.

More information on Rivers of Babylon can be found at www.riversofbabyon.com.

INSTRUMENTS USED BY RIVERS OF BABYLON

Dumbuk – Varieties of this goblet shaped single headed drum are found in much of the Arab world, Iran and South Eastern Europe.

Oud – A short necked, unfretted plucked stringed instrument found throughout much of the Arab world. The ‘oud usually has five or six courses of strings and is played with a plectrum.

Druze, beduin and Indian pipes – These are all varieties of end-blown pipes – aerophonic instruments consisting of a tube which may be either open or stopped at the end and can have finger holes.

Shertén – This is a form of VERY loud finger clicking from Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Accordion – This portable instrument of the reed organ family consists of two keyboards connected by a bellows. The treble keyboard has keys like those of a piano while the bass keyboard consists of buttons.

Oboe and cor anglais – Similar to the Indian shehnai and nagasvaram, the oboe is the principle double reed instrument in Western music. The cor anglais, or English horn, is a larger member of the oboe family, and tuned one fifth lower than the oboe.

Violin – Familiar to audiences around the world this instrument has also found a home in the music of the Baghdad Jews and more widely in Arabic music.

NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

The translation and transliteration of the song texts are taken from Manasseh (2004).

1. Yehi Shalom Béjelénu
   ("May there be peace within our walls")
   Mumbai 22 February 2005

This is perhaps the most famous of hymns for the birth of a son. It may be sung at the synagogue, on the Sabbath following the birth, to honour the parents, or immediately preceding the circumcision ceremony, which is normally performed when the baby boy is eight days old. The song, in context, is performed unaccompanied by instruments. On this track, the song is introduced on the ‘oud. As is customary on joyful songs for life-cycle celebrations, this track is accompanied by high-pitched ululations, and also by high trills on instruments. Audience reception as always to this song is enthusiastic both in participation in the ululations and in hearty applause.

TRANSLATION:

I Yehi shalom be-heylenu
Weshalwah be-yeisra-el
Bisman tob ben bainun
Beyamaw yibo haggoel

Refrain: (Amen) Bisman tob ben bainun
Beyamaw yibo haggoel

II Hayyelad yehi ra-anan
Bajel shadda-y yithloun
Wubatarah az yithbonan
Ye-allaf dath lekhol sho-d

III Wumqoro yehi bariuk
Zeman hayyaw yehi arukh
Weshulbano yehi arukh
Wizibio lo yizgael

IV Shemo yese bekhol ebir
Asher yigdalt yehi gheber
Wulyir-e el yehi habar
Yehi bedoro kismuwl

V ‘Adiy ziqnah wegham sebah
Yehi dushen bekhol toxah
Wehashalom lo wero abahah
Amén kén yomar hâel

VI Hannimmol betokh ‘ammo
Yibiyeh le-äbiw wil-immo
Weyiyeh elohom ‘immo
Wegham kol beth yisrael

TRANSCRIPTION:

I May there be peace within our walls, [Psalms 122:7]
And security in Israel.
In a good sign a son is born to us.
May the redeemer come in his days.

Refrain
[Amen] In a good sign a son is born to us.
May the redeemer come in his days.

II The boy will be invigorated
Under the protection of the Almighty.
Studying the Torah.
Teaching the Law to all who enquire.
I N S T R U M E N T S U S E D B Y
R I V E R S O F B A B Y L O N

Dumbuk – Varieties of this goblet shaped single headed drum are found in much of the Arab world, Iran and South Eastern Europe.

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Druze, beduin and Indian pipes – These are all varieties of end-blown pipes – aerophonic instruments consisting of a tube which may be either open or stopped at the end and can have finger holes.

Sbarten – This is a form of VERY loud finger clicking from Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Accordion – This portable instrument of the reed organ family consists of two keyboards connected by a bellows. The treble keyboard has keys like those of a piano while the bass keyboard consists of buttons.

Oboe and cor anglais – Similar to the Indian shehnai and nagasvaram, the oboe is the principle double reed instrument in Western music. The cor anglais, or English horn, is a larger member of the oboe family and tuned one fifth lower than the oboe.

Violin – Familiar to audiences around the world this instrument has also found a home in the music of the Baghdad Jews and more widely in Arabic music.

N O T E S O N T H E R E C O R D I N G S

The translation and trans literation of the song texts are taken from Manasseh (2004).

1. Yehi Shalom Bejeleenu
   (“May there be peace within our walls”)
   Mumbai 22 February 2005
   This is perhaps the most famous of hymns for the birth of a son. It may be sung at the synagogue, on the Sabbath following the birth, to honour the parents, or immediately preceding the circumcision ceremony, which is normally performed when the baby boy is eight days old. The song, in context, is performed unaccompanied by instruments.
   On this track, the song is introduced on the oud. As is customary on joyful songs for life-cycle celebrations, this track is accompanied by high-pitched ululations, and also by high trills on instruments. Audience reception as always to this song is enthusiastic both in participation in the ululations and in hearty applause.

   TRANSLATION:
   I. Yehi shalom be-heyleenu
      Weshalwah be-yisra-el
      Beismain tob ben b’lannu
      Belayamay yabo haggoel
   Refrain: (Amen) Beismain tob ben b’lannu
   Belayamay yabo haggoel
   II. Hayyelad yehi ra-anan
       Bejel shadda-y yithronon
       Wubakotah az yithbonon
       Ye-alaf dath lekhul sho-S

   III. Wumquoro yehi barukh
        Zeman hawyay yehi arukh
        Weshalwah yehi arukh
        Wezibbho lo yizgal

   IV. Shemo yese bekhol eber
       Ascher yighdal yehi gheber
       Wulir-e el yehi habar
       Yehi bedoro kishmuel

   V. ‘Adey znin yewgam sebah
       Yehi daseh bekhol tobah
       Weshalam lo weroab ahahab
       Amen k’i yomar hae

   VI. Hanimmol bethokh ’ammo
       Yibiyeh le-aiw wa-limmoh
       Weyiyeh eloah ‘immo
       Waghim kol beth yisrael

   TRANSLATION:
   I. May there be peace within our walls, [Psalms 122:7]
   And security in Israel.
   In a good sign a son is born to us.
   May the redeemer come in his days.
   Refrain
   (Amen) In a good sign a son is born to us.
   May the redeemer come in his days.

   II. The boy will be invigorated
       Under the protection of the Almighty.
       Studying the Torah.
       Teaching the Law to all who enquire.
III And his fountain (family life) will be blessed,
[Proverbs 5:18]
The span of his days will be long,
His table will always be prepared,[C/PSalms 23:5]
And his feast will not be defiled.

IV His name will be known at home and abroad.
He will be a gentleman when he grows up,
And a friend to the God-fearing.
In his generation he will be as Samuel.

V He will live to a ripe old age,
He will have abundance of all things good,
And will enjoy peace and abundant love.
May the Lord say 'Amen' to this.

VI The circumcised one among his people,
With his father and mother (the length of their days).
And may the Lord be with him,
And with all the House of Israel.

2. Muqaddima Hijaz
Delhi 20 February 2005
Iraqi (trad.) Melodic mode: hijaz.
An Arabic composition, 'Muqaddima Hijaz' is an instrumental
"prelude" in the mode of hijaz. It is usually played at concerts
as a prelude to a song in the same modal mode, as in
this case — where it introduces the songs in hijaz, in Track 3.
'Muqaddima Hijaz' is a secular piece, and not associated
with a specific religious group or occasion. The instruments heard
on this track are oud, violin, cor anglais, accordion, dambuka
and tambourine.

3. Ki Eshmérā Shabbath (Because I Keep the
Sabbath) / Balini-b Balwa (He Plagues me with a
Plague)
Bangalore 17 February 2005
Text: Abraham Ibn Ezra (c 1089 - c 1164)
Acrostic: Abraham. Melodic mode: hijaz
This track features a well-loved Iraqi folk song, Balini-b Balwa
('He's a plague on me!'), which was also widely known
among the Baghdad Jewish community in India. Balini-b Balwa
is sung in Arabic, but Rivers of Babylon begins and
ends the performance with the Hebrew refrain of a popular
Sabbath text, Ki Eshmérā Shabbath, which may also be
sung to the same tune. Though it may appear inappropriate
to combine religious and secular sentiments, the practice
of singing a sacred text to a tune associated with profane
lyrics has been standard practice for many centuries.
The text of Ki Eshmérā Shabbath was composed by
Abraham Ibn Ezra (c1089 - 1164), one of the leading figures
in the Golden Age of Poetry in Andalusian Spain. Known in
many Jewish traditions, the text may be sung to a number of
tunes, some associated with secular songs, as in this case.
Balini-b Balwa is a love song, despite its title! The Arabic
text is collected from the singing of Salha Khatan, who
often sang it as a lullaby to her grand children (recorded c
1983, Brian Elias, London) and from Jacob Bahar (recorded
1985, Sara Manasseh, Manchester), both informants having
lived previously in Baghdad and Bombay.

The 'oud introduces the song, joined by the remaining
instruments, with voices following. The two instrumental
interludes feature instrumental solos.

TRANSLATION
(Refrain: from Sabbath text)
Refrain: Ki eshmérā shabbath ēl yishmērenī
Oth ēl lēōmāt ‘ād béynō úbēynī

Iraqi folk song:
(Refrain.) Balini-b balwa yā ‘yūnī
Balini-b balwa
Wallāh māridā yā ‘ēynī
Balini-b balwa

I Kul yom āqūl el-yom
Bācher yibēyēnīn
Lanṭī lil-imbāshīr
Boṣā mnīl ‘yūn
Wallāh māridā yā ‘ēynī
Balini-b balwa

II Wāshlōn ānām al-lēl
Wūnta ‘alā bālī
Hartā-sīmich bil mā-y
Yibchī ‘alā ġālī

III Kul el-ḥlam tīt
W‘ēynī ‘alā balmak
Wūmnil-hawā wul-roj
Rabbī yis‘almak

(Refrain.) Balini-b balwa yā ‘yūnī
Balini-b balwa

Hubbi wa-āridā
Balini-b balwa
3. **Ki Eshmērah Shabbath** (Because I Keep the Sabbath) / **Balini-b Balwa** (He Plagues me with a Plague)

_Bangalore 17 February 2005_

_Text: Abraham Ibn Ezra (c 1089-1164)_

_Acrostic: Abraham. Melodic mode: ḫijāz_

_Balini-b Balwa: Anon. Iraqi folk song._

This track features a well-loved Iraqi folk song, **Balini-b Balwa** (He’s a plague on me!), which was also widely known among the Baghdād Jewish community in India. **Balini-b Balwa** is sung in Arabic, but *Rivers of Babylon* begins and ends the performance with the Hebrew refrain of a popular Sabbath text, **Ki Eshmērah Shabbath**, which may also be sung to the same tune. Though it may appear inappropriate to combine religious and secular sentiments, the practice of singing a sacred text to a tune associated with profane lyrics has been standard practice for many centuries.

The text of **Ki Eshmērah Shabbath** was composed by Abraham Ibn Ezra (c1089–1164), one of the leading figures in the Golden Age of Poetry in Andalusian Spain. Known in many Jewish traditions, the text may be sung to a number of tunes, some associated with secular song, as in this case. **Balini-b Balwa** is a love song, despite its title! The Arabic text is collected from the singing of Salha Khattan, who often sang it as a lullaby to her grand children (recorded c 1983, Brian Elias, London) and from Jacob Baher (recorded 1985, Sara Manasseh, Manchester), both informants having lived previously in Baghdad and Bombay.

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_Hebrew wa-āridā_

_Balini-b balwā_

Translation:

(Refrain: from Sabbath text)

_Because I keep the Sabbath, the Lord will keep me, It is an eternal sign between Him and me._

_Iraqi folk song:

(Refrain) He plagued me with a plague, oh my eyes! He plagued me with a plague! By God! I don’t want him, my eye! He plagued me with a plague! I Every day I say, today – or tomorrow – they will come, And I’ll give the bringer of good news A kiss from the eyes._

_II How can I sleep at night, With you on my mind? Even the fish in the water Weep at my condition._

_III All night the rowing boats go by, And my eyes are on your boat. And from the winds and the waves The Lord will protect you._

_(Final Refrain) He plagued me with a plague, oh my eyes! He’s a plague upon me! He’s my love, and I want him, He’s a plague upon me!_
4. Siméni Rosh ’Al Kol Oybay ("Place Me Above All My Foes")
Pune 20 February 2005
Acrostic Shemoloh Jazzég ("Solomon, be strong!"))
Melodic mode: nanawand (It may also be sung in bayát).
A hymn for the Festival of Purim ("Feast of Lots"), which commemorates the saving of the Persian Jews from extermination, as related in the Bible, in the Book of Esther. The festival is a happy one, with many of the songs in similar mood. The present song, in contrast, deals with the darker, more sombre aspect of the festival.
The performance is introduced by an improvisation on 'awd, leading to the melody of the refrain, and unaccompanied voices. The instruments play as an ensemble, but the silvery high sound of the mandolin, is especially prominent. The final refrains feature short solos by the vocalists.

TRANSLATION:
I Siméni rosh ’al kol oybá-y
- Wussamshébeni
Kiméy mordékha-y bén yábir
- El hánnun webómmoni
Refrain. Mábó thiimbhéhù lé-édó
- Hakheh ém ’al bámín
II Libashá mhalkhéth lahadassáh - Wéhištaltá
Bé-quím hámmán há-aghághi
- Kétánnin lebbálééni
III Hámán háshash lé-abédéni
- Wúllashmidéni
Dáboh déthithálinpó - Wámóñáy azzáriná

IV Hazzéq léb ’abbáddák kéqéédén
- Wé-ammséén
Bízkhtút yishqáq saqéqékáh - Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút abráhm ahóóbékhá
- Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút ya’qób tóómmíékáh
- Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút yosef såddéqékhá
- Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút moshéh nébékáh
- Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút aharon kokhánékáh
- Hashibéni ’al kanní
Bízkhtút dawíd méséhékáh
- Hashibéni ’al kanní

TRANSLATION:
I Set me above my foes, and let me rejoice,
As in the times of Mordekhái son of Yair, let the Lord be merciful and show me compassion.
Refrain: Wipe out Edom and destroy him completely.
II If you clothed Esther in majesty, and saved me
When Haman the Agagite rose like a crocodile to swallow me up.
III Haman thought to annihilate me, and stamp me out,
He thrust me down, I nearly fell, but the Lord supported me.
(Psalm 118.13)
IV Strengthen the heart of your servant as in the past, and give me courage,

For the merit of Isaac, your bound one, restore me to my former position.
For the merit of Abraham, your beloved one, restore me to my former position.
For the merit of Jacob, your perfect one, restore me...
For the merit of Joseph, your righteous one, restore me...
For the merit of Moses, your prophet, restore me...
For the merit of Aarón, your priest, restore me...
For the merit of David, your Messiah, restore me...

5. Yom Hashabbath ("The Sabbath Day")
Kolbeita 8 February 2005
Acrostic Manhúry Melodic mode: ojám
Perhaps the best loved shabáh ("Praise song") for the Sabbath, the hymn praises this longed for day of rest. It is the song most likely to be heard at Sabbath meals, and is sung with verse, by family and friends - either between courses or at the end of the meal. Performed in the ojám mode (its melodic intervals equivalent to the North Indian bálló, to the Karnástaff dhinshankhabharonam and Western major scale), this song lends itself well to impromptu harmonisation. Middle Eastern music is characterised by an absence of harmony so that when harmony is encountered, the effect is unusual and surprising. This performance features vocal harmonisation from the outset.

In this performance, the accordion immediately evokes a jolly, convivial spirit so characteristic of the song. The instrumental ensemble, including the violin, and contrasting sounds of the high flute and low oud, pays together on the interludes, with the oboe, prominent in the repeat of the interlude following verse 2. In context, for example at the dining table, it is quite usual for fewer people to sing the verses, with all participants joining in the chorus.

TRANSLATION:
Yom hashabbath éyn kámóí (Refrain): Bérákho élhóym wayqaddédósh
I Míyyóm ríshón ’ad yom shishásh
Líqárrth shabbáth niqíshéfah náshí
Kí bashabbáth ééș hóshá
Wékííth yom ménuñáh qárráshí

II Nághil wénísmáy kí tób láhóodoth
Wuzumámr élyón ’al kol odoth
Kí hashabbáth lanú hamúddoth
Isbííá’í lo yédáíh

III Sívwáá la’asoth shabbáth kahalákháh
Áz misláíni miswáh ’arúkháh
Gám líí lézírámákh kétér mékókháh
Wékábhód wéháár rédá’érgréhá

IV Ráshá amóñá wùlahár báñú
Wúnikol láshon hibíddláñú
Wúqduñsháthashashabbáth hínñí láñú
Kol zérá ya’qób kabbóéhá
(Kol zérá yisráel yismérédóh)

TRANSLATION:
The Sabbath day, there is none like it,
Refrain: The Lord blessed it, and sanctified it.
I From the first day (Sunday) until the sixth (Friday),
My soul longs for the Sabbath,
For on the Sabbath I go forth free,
And so I call it a day of rest.
For the merit of Isaac, your bound one, restore me to my former position.
For the merit of Abraham, your beloved one, restore me to my former position.
For the merit of Jacob, your perfect one, restore me ...
For the merit of Joseph, your righteous one, restore me ...
For the merit of Moses, your prophet, restore me ...
For the merit of Aaron, your priest, restore me ...
For the merit of David, your Messiah, restore me ...

5. Yom Hashabbath ("The Sabbath Day")
Kolkata 8 February 2005
Acrostic: Menah'el Melodic mode: qijam
Perhaps the best loved shabb ("Praise song") for the Sabbath, the hymn praises this longed for day of rest. It is the song most likely to be heard at Sabbath meals, and is sung with verse, by family and friends - either between courses or at the end of the meal. Performed in the qijam mode (its melodic intervals equivalent to the North Indian bivalo, to the Karnatak dhishchankhoranam and Western major scale), this song lends itself well to impromptu harmonisation. Middle Eastern music is characterised by an absence of harmony so that when harmony is encountered, the effect is unusual and surprising. This performance features vocal harmonisation from the outset.
In this performance, the accordion immediately evokes a jolly, convivial spirit so characteristic of the song. The instrumental ensemble, including the violin, and contrasting sounds of the high flute and low oud, pays together on the interludes, with the oboe, prominent in the repeat of the interlude following verse 2. In context, for example at the dining table, it is quite usual for fewer people to sing the verses, with all participants joining in the chorus.

TRANSLATION:
Yom hashabbath ein kamehoh
(Refrain): Berekh lo eloheinu wayyadidshem
I Miyoym risun 'ad yom shishah
Liqrath barabbath nikhesefah nafshi
Ki barabbath efe hoshaf
Wekhri yom menah'el egerah

II Nagnil wenismah kli tole dohodho
Wuzammery elyon 'al kol odoth
Ki hashabbath lanu hamulodho
Ish bar'ar lo yedah

III Siwlah la'asoth barabbath kahalahkah
Az missinai miyvah 'arukkah
Gam li lesomrah khetoh melokkah
Wekhbad wehadar ra'tehrah

IV Rassah amonay wudabah banu
Wunikul lason hibdulan
Wugdushshah hashabbath hinhil lanu
Kol zera ya'asbabbad
(Kol zera yisrael yishmerah)

TRANSLATION:
The Sabbath day, there is none like it, Refrain: The Lord blessed it, and sanctified it.
I From the first day (Sunday) until the sixth (Friday), My soul longs for the Sabbath, For on the Sabbath I go forth free, And so I call it a day of rest.
We shall rejoice and be glad, for it is good to give thanks
And to sing praise to the Lord on high for all things.
For the Sabbath is our desire;
An ignorant man does not know its value.

He commanded us to make the Sabbath, according to the law,
From Sinai was the commandment set forth.
It is a royal crown to him who keeps it
And adorns him with honour and glory.

The Lord willed and chose us,
And separated us from all peoples,
The sanctity of the Sabbath he gave us to inherit.
All the seed of Jacob shall honour it.
All the seed of Israel shall observe it.

6. Él Éliyyahuahu ("Lord of Elijah")
Pune 20 February 2005
Acrostic: Abrahám: Text: Abrahám: Ibn "Ezra (c 1089- c 1164)
Melodic mode: bay'át
Written by Abrahám Ibn "Ezra, one of the leading luminaries of
Hebrew secular and liturgical poetry, which blossomed in
medieval Andalusian Spain, this hymn remains a favourite in
the Baghdadi tradition, where it has a dual function. It is
sung every week, at the habadháh (Separation of the Sabbath
from week-days) service following the termination of the
Sabbath (mosa-éy shabbath), when it is believed that Elijah
the Prophet visits. It is also sung for the birth of a boy, on the
night of the ñad el-ýád (Judeo-Arabic: Binding of the Myrtle),
and the following morning, at the circumcision ceremony,
normally performed when the baby is eight days old. The

hymn, sedate yet festive, is sometimes punctuated by
"Alláhu-s" - ululations.
The song is performed in the mode of bay'dt, similar to the
North and South Indian ásávari and na gáthávarí,
respectively, and the Western natural minor scale, but with
the second degree tuned a quarter tone flat, producing a
three-quarter tone between intervals 1 and 2, and again
between intervals 2 and 3. In the present performance,
the song is introduced on the 'ud, with a short rhythmic ostinato
leading to the melody, joined by violin and mandolin on the
repeat. The refrain is sung by all singers, with soloists on
the individual verses. The two instrumental interludes feature
the violin and the 'ud. Both singers and instrumentalists join
in the ululations - as did much of the audience!

TRANSLATION
(Refrain) God of Elijah,
God of Elijah,
In honour of Elijah,
Oh bring the prophet to us!

I He will harness his mobile chariot
Of salvation; they call you Lord,
And raise their voices and sing to you.

V Máthá-y tar-êh oth
Yéshu' él qoroth
Lákh wulká nos-oth
Qólán watárónico

VI Hammal-ákh hago-él
Líféné dal shoél
Anna háél él
Abrahám háxcéth ná.

TRANSLATION
(Refrain) God of Elijah,
God of Elijah,
In honour of Elijah,
Oh bring the prophet to us!

II He will harness his mobile chariot
Captive, in it
His heart was restless,
And neither did he have any sleep.

III We are very disturbed when we see
That those who belittle and hate us
Are themselves beautiful, and wax
Fat, grazing (in the field).

IV Lord, give them bitter water to drink,
The enemy looks at us with piercing eyes.
My eyes look to the day when the Holy One
Pays heed to Israel.

V When will you show the sign
Of salvation; they call you Lord,
And raise their voices and sing to you.

VI May the Angel of Redemption
Plead for the poor.
We beseech You, Oh Lord! God
Of Abraham, make it happen!

7. Éliyyahu Hannabee ("Elijah, the Prophet")
Pune 20 February 2005
Sung in Marathi, the language of the state of Maharashtra,
the text is composed to the melody of the 1950s film hit Dil
Ek Mandir Hai ("The Heart is a Temple") - another example
of a melody to a secular song being used as the basis for
a religious text. Elijah the Prophet is associated with
the coming of the Messiah, and holds a particularly significant
place in the Bene Israel tradition.
Marathi song texts of the Bene Israel often include names
of biblical figures and words in Hebrew.In the present song,
both words in the title itself are from the Hebrew: Éliyyahuahu
(Elijah) and Hannabi (The prophet). Other occurrences of
Hebrew in this song are: Makkábi (the "Maccabees",
signifying the Jewish people) and Pinájí (Pinhas, the
grandson of Aaron). There is a belief that Elijah, himself the
precursor of the Messiah, is a reincarnation of Pinhas.
At Rivers of Babylon concerts in India, this song was
particularly appreciated by members of the Bene Israel
community and by Marathi speakers in general. At the Pune
performance, heard on this track, the lines "darkshaná dyá
yá, yá garbhá, yé-ooni yá bhoomiwárí" drew an emotional
response and appreciative applause from the audience.
The song is introduced by a free improvisation on accordion,
leading to the melody in waltz-timing, or the 6-beat dáda
táál in Indian music. The remaining instruments enter with
the voices, with the violin and cor anglais especially
We shall rejoice and be glad, for it is good to give thanks
And to sing praise to the Lord on high for all things.
For the Sabbath is our desire;
An ignorant man does not know its value.

He commanded us to make the Sabbath, according to the law,
From Sinai was the commandment set forth.
It is a royal crown to him who keeps it
And adorns him with honour and glory.

The Lord willed and chose us,
And separated us from all peoples,
The sanctity of the Sabbath he gave us to inherit.
All the seed of Jacob shall honour it.
All the seed of Israel shall observe it.

6. Él Eliyyahu ("Lord of Elijah")
Pune 20 February 2005
Acrostic: Abrahám Text: Abrahám Ibn 'Ezra (c 1089 - c 1164)
Melodic mode: bayd
Written by Bréhám Ibn 'Ezra, one of the leading luminaries of Hebraic secular and liturgical poetry, which blossomed in medieval Andalusian Spain, this hymn remains a favourite in the Bagdad tradition, where it has a dual function. It is sung every week, at the habaddâh (Separation of the Sabbath from week-days) service following the termination of the Sabbath (mosa-éy shebâbah), when it is believed that Elijah the Prophet visits. It is also sung for the birth of a boy, on the night of the aqqa el-yâd (Judeo-Arabic: Binding of the Myrtle), and the following morning, at the circumcision ceremony, normally performed when the baby is eight days old. The hymn, sedate yet festive, is sometimes punctuated by "kih" - ululations.
The song is performed in the mode of bayd, similar to the North and South Indian ásâvari and na ghatâra, respectively, and the Western natural minor scale, but with the second degree tuned a quarter tone flat, producing a three-quarter tone between intervals 1 and 2, and again between intervals 2 and 3. In the present performance, the song is introduced on the 'ud, with a short rhythmic ostinato leading to the melody, joined by violin and mandolin on the repeat. The refrain is sung by all singers, with soloists on the individual verses. The two instrumental interludes feature the violin and the 'ud. Both singers and instrumentalists join in the ululations - as did much of the audience!

TRANSLATION:
(Refrain) God of Elijah,
May the Angel of Redemption
Plead for the poor.
We beseech You, Oh Lord! God
Of Abraham, make it happen!

Él Eliyyahu Hannâbêc ("Elijah, the Prophet")
Pune 20 February 2005
Sung in Marathi, the language of the state of Maharashtra, the text is composed to the melody of the 1950s film hit Dil Ek Mandir Hai ("The Heart is a Temple") - another example of a melody to a secular song being used as the basis for a religious text. Elijah the Prophet is associated with the coming of the Messiah, and holds a particularly significant place in the Bne Israel tradition.
Marathi song texts of the Bene Israel often include names of biblical figures and words in Hebrew. In the present song, both words in the title itself are from the Hebrew: Eliyyahu (Elijah) and Hanbi (The prophet). Other occurrences of Hebrew in this song are: Makkâbi (the "Maccabees", signifying the Jewish people) and Panjâb (Pindas, the grandson of Aaron). There is a belief that Elijah, himself the precursor of the Messiah, is a reincarnation of Pindas.
At Rivers of Babylon concerts in India, this song was particularly appreciated by members of the Bene Israel community and by Marathi speakers in general. At the Pune performance, heard on this track, the lines "darshana dyâ yâ, yâ garbihâ, yê-ooni yâ bhoomiwar, drew an emotional response and appreciative applause from the audience.

The song is introduced by a free improvisation on accordion, leading to the melody in waltz-time, or the 6-beat dodra tät in Indian music. The remaining instruments enter with the voices, with the violin and cor anglais especially
prominent. The *oud*, mandolin and *dumbuk*, also add depth and colour to the ensemble. Vocal soloists with the ensemble add vocal harmonies at the end of the song, which is in the minor mode, but ends with a major chord, and appears almost as a ray of sunshine, as though the prayers have been answered, and that Elijah has indeed appeared in a vision. This song was added to *Rivers of Babylon* repertoire from the recording appearing on Shaked (2001).

**Translation:**

(Refrain) eliyahu hannahi, wata tumchik azah pahate hi sari makkabi

I
goragarihantsa tu rakawalavumchyatsa nawacli zapato mi malaimarusha da ya, ya garibla y-ooni ya bhoonimwiri

II
ek sadichha pinhasiyancha ahé ho antari

**Translation:**

(Refrain) Elijah, the Prophet — all the Jewish people
Constantly await your coming

I
You are the protector of all the poor
Your name is incessantly on my mind
Bless this poor person by granting a vision
By descending upon this earth

II
This is the one, profound wish of the Jewish people
The people of Pinhas [the Messiah]

8. (a) Sinai Sinai Ayyeh Mosheh ("Sinai, Sinai, where is Moses?")

(Trad. Babylonian)

Alphabetical acrostic. Form: call and response. Melodic mode: nahawand

(b) Sinaii Dongrawar Mosheh ("To Moses, Upon Mount Sinai")

(Trad. Bene Israel) Form: call and response

Pune 20 February 2005

Both well-loved songs for Sinah oth Thow (Rejoicing of the Law), these are performed as call and response between the leader and congregation.

The Baghdad version is especially remembered in performance during the 1950s and 1960s at the Kenesseth Eliyahu Synagogue (Fort, Bombay), as sung by Isaac Barukh, then the shammash (beadle) of the synagogue.

*Sinai, Sinai, ayyeh Mosheh*? ("Sinai, Sinai, where is Moses?")

the congregation response changes around the order of the words "Sinai" and "Mosheh" thus:

Mosheh Mosheh, ayyeh Sinai? ("Moses, Moses, where is Sinai?")

Of added interest is that the leader may present the words "Sinai" and "Mosheh" in reverse order, so that to "get it right" the congregation has to be alert and ready to swap the words around, depending on the leader's presentation.

Audiences, including children, at the Remembered Rhythms concerts were quick to pick up the format and supported the performance with their enthusiastic responses at all venues, without exception.

The song is in the Iraqi ten-beat igrug or jujina rhythm (5+5).

The Bene Israel version, sung in Marathi, is based on the Baghdad song, *Rivers of Babylon* learnt the Marathi song from the singing of Hannabi Aaron Penkar, and Dinah and Samson Karkekar (recorded 2003, Sara Manasseh, Mumbai). Here too, the element of call and response is a feature of the song, and the qualities of Moses' character are enumerated in the verses, though not in the form of an alphabetic acrostic. Members of the Bene Israel community who attended the concerts congratulated the group on the song being sung just as they remembered it, and on the Marathi pronunciation!

In performance, *Rivers of Babylon* combined the two songs, beginning and ending with the Baghdad version.

The introduction is unaccompanied voices, Sara Manasseh leading with the call on the refrain, and the group, including the instrumentalists, singing the appropriate response. The instruments enter with the verse, and during interludes, maintain the call and response pattern — most calls being initiated on *dumuk* and during the longer interlude, by the accordion and violin. The flute and mandolin are also heard, while the *dumuk* underlines the *igrug* rhythm.

The soloists also bring variety in terms of dynamics, with loud and soft calls leading to similar responses.

Following verse 6 and a short instrumental interlude, the Bene Israel song *Sinai Dongrawar Mosheh* is introduced, with the new call in Marathi. The oboe enters now, adding to the instrumental timbre. Three verses are sung, as solo and the following verse is sung as a duet; the responses are sung by the group, and the instruments provide interludes. The *dumuk* reinstates the *igrug* rhythm to lead back to a reprisal of *Sinai Sinai ayyeh Mosheh*, with the calls and responses exploring a range of dynamics from very loud to the quietest whisper.

8a) Baghdad/Babylonian text (Hebrew)

**Translation:**

(Refrain) Sinaii Sinaii ayyeh mosheh?

Mosheh mosheh ayyeh Sinai?

I
Ahab nibhah al hær Sinaii — Bärük nibhah al hær Sinaii
Gibbor nibhah al hær Sinaii — Daghul nibhah al hær Sinaii

II
Hadur — Wáed — Zaká — Hannán
Sahor — Yähid — Kabbir — Lā‘ad
Mélekh — Norá — Somekh — “Ozé
Podeh — Šaddiq — Qodosh — Ra‘um
Shadaii — Támim — Tomékh — Taqiq

**Translation:**

(Refrain) Mount Sinai, Mount Sinai, where is Moses?
Mount Sinai, where is Mount Sinai?

I
The loved one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the blessed one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the heroic one (etc.), the distinguished one (etc.).

II
The glorious one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the eternal one was revealed (etc.), the righteous one (etc.), the merciful one (etc.).

III
The pure one; the unique one; the mighty one; the eternal one.
prominent. The ūud, mandolin and dumbug, also add depth and colour to the ensemble. Vocal soloists with the ensemble add vocal harmonies at the end of the song, which is in the minor mode, but ends with a major chord, and appears almost as a ray of sunshine, as though the prayers have been answered, and that Elijah has indeed appeared in a vision. This song was added to *Rivers of Babylon* repertoire from the recording appearing on *Shaked* (2001).

**Translation:**

*(Refrain)* eliyahu hannahi, waTa tumchi ăza pahate hi sari makkabi

I gorăgaribahsa tu rakhawala turchytas wawachi zapato mi mală darshana dyă yă, yă garibala yŏ-oonii yă bhoomivari

II ēk sadichhă pinhasiyanhă āhe ho antarri

---

**Translation:**

*(Refrain)* Elijah, the Prophet — all the Jewish people

I You are the protector of all the poor

II This is the one, profound wish of the Jewish people

The people of Pinhas [the Messiah]

---

8. (a) Sinai Sinai Ayyeh Moshēh ("Sinai, Sinai, where is Moses?"

(Trad. Babylonian)

Alphabetical acrostic. Form: call and response. Melodic mode: nahawand

(b) Sinai Dongrąwar Mosheľa ("To Moses, Upon Mount Sinai"

(Trad. Bene Israel) Form: call and response

Pune 20 February 2005

Both well-loved songs for Sinai (Rejoicing of the Law), these are performed as call and response between the leader and congregation.

The Baghdad version is especially remembered in performance during the 1950s and ’60s at the Keneseth Eliyahu Synagogue (Fort, Bombay), as sung by Isaac Barukh, then the shammas (beadle) of the synagogue.

Sinai, Sinai, ayēh Moshēh? ("Sinai, Sinai, where is Moses?")

The congregation response changes around the order of the words "Sinai" and "Moshēh":

Mošēh Mošēh, ayēh Sinai? ("Moses, Moses, where is Sinai?")

Of added interest is that the leader may present the words "Sinai" and "Moshēh" in reverse order, so that to get it right the congregation has to be alert and ready to swap the words around, depending on the leader's presentation.

Audiences, including children, at the Remembered Rhythms concerts were quick to pick up the format and supported the performance with their enthusiastic responses at all venues, without exception.

The song is in the Iraqi ten-beat igrag or jurrina rhythm (5+5).

The Bene Israel version, sung in Marathi, is based on the Baghdad song. *Rivers of Babylon* learnt the Marathi song from the singing of Hannahbai Aaron Penkar, and Dinah and Samson Karlekar (recorded 2003, Sara Manasseh, Mumbai).

Here too, the element of call and response is a feature of the song, and the qualities of Moses’ character are enumerated in the verses, though not in the form of an alphabetic acrostic. Members of the Bene Israel community who attended the concerts congratulated the group on the song being sung just as they remembered it, and on the Marathi pronunciation!

In performance, *Rivers of Babylon* combined the two songs, beginning and ending with the Baghdad version.

The introduction is unaccompanied voices, Sara Manasseh leading with the call on the refrain, and the group, including the instrumentalists, singing the appropriate response. The instruments enter with the verse, and during interludes, maintain the call and response pattern — most calls being initiated on ūud, and during the longer interludes, by the accordion and violin. The flute and mandolin are also heard, while the dumbug underlines the igrag rhythm.

The soloists also bring variety in terms of dynamics, with loud and soft calls leading to similar responses.

Following verse 6 and a short instrumental interlude, the Bene Israel song *Sinai Dongrąwar Mosheľa* is introduced, with the new call in Marathi. The oboe enters now, adding to the instrumental timbre. Three verses are sung, as solo and the following verse is sung as a duet; the responses are sung by the group, and the instruments provide interludes.

The dumbug reinstates the igrag rhythm to lead back to a reprise of *Sinai Sinai ayyēh Mošēh*, with the calls and responses exploring a range of dynamics from very loud to the quietest whisper.

8a) Baghdad/Babylonian text (Hebrew)

**Translation:**

*(Refrain)* Sinai sinai ayyeh mosheh?

Mošēh moshēh ayyēh sinai?

I Āḥūb nighlāh ‘al hār sinai — Bárukh nighlāh ‘al hār sinai

Gibbor nighlāh ‘al hār sinai — Dāghūl nighlāh ‘al hār sinai

II Hádūr ... Wā’ed ... Zakāi ... Ḥannūn

III sähōr ... Yāḥid ... Kabbir ... Lā’ad ...

IV Mēlkēh ... Nōrā ... Somekēh ... ‘Ozēr

V Pōdēh ... Śaddiq ... Qūdosh ... Raḥūm

VI Shadāi ... Tāmīm ... Tomēk ... Taqffī

---

**Translation:**

*(Refrain)* Mount Sinai, Mount Sinai, where is Moses?

Moses, Moses, where is Mount Sinai?

I The loved one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the blessed one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the heroic one (etc.), the distinguished one (etc.).

II The glorious one was revealed (on Mount Sinai), the eternal one was revealed (etc.), the righteous one (etc.), the merciful one (etc.).

III The pure one; the unique one; the mighty one; the eternal one.
One of the most popular wedding songs in the Jewish-Babylonian tradition. While not sung as part of the wedding ceremony itself, it may be performed in honour of the groom and the bride at celebrations for their engagement, or at synagogue, when the groom is called up to read the portion from the Torah (Pentateuch) scroll on Sabbath. Immediately before and after the wedding, the hymn may also be sung during the seven nights of blessings (sheba‘ bérakhot) and festive meals following the wedding.

Following a short instrumental introduction, the group sings the refrain. Many of the verses feature vocal solos. Refrains are often punctuated by ululations – both vocal and instrumental (oboe and flute). The final refrain is reinforced with clapping once again with audience participation.

Translation:

I (Refrain) Emeth atah hathanenu
– Kemo sahar bethokhenu
Kemelkh at lefaneynu
– Yevarechekha eloheynu

II Belkhallathekha me-od (hathan) tismah
Bero mamon werob qemah
Wetizhekha lajazoth semah
– Wetil qodshe yebienun

III Yehi zarekh b’eyisrael
Weyokhmatashak kaghabriel
Wetobathak lekhol sho-eh
Wesimnon tob lekhullah

IV Temeim demim yevarechekhem
Weyarekhem wayarbekehem
Weyar-akhem le’eymekhem
Weyar-enu meshiyhenu

V Real tho-ar hathan misrah
‘Alay rosho kelil torah
Wekhallatho kitzor orah
Kemo shemesh be-arzenu

VI Hazak hathan bepuathak
Weghil wusmah bekhallathak
– W-et el shadda y-b’ezrat hak
Wegham yihye be’ezrenu

Translation:

8b) Bene Israel text (Marathi):

Sinay Dongrawar moshelala
Bene Israel (trad.) / Marathi
Sung in the call and response style with the chorus responding ‘Sinai Dongar’ (Mount Sinai).

Chorus:
Sinai Dongrawar moshelala
Pawitra shasta dilé amhala

Transliteration:
I phar pawitra,
(Response) sinai Dongar namra aheto,
(Response) sinai Dongar swachha aheto,
(Response) sinai Dongar
II lahan aheto,
(Response) sinai Dongar
– pram bharit ah,
(Response) sinai Dongar
– ahawadra,
(Response) sinai Dongar
III harsha karito,
(Response) sinai Dongar
nachal lagala,

(Response) sinai Dongar
g-a-ú láglá,
(Response) sinai Dongar

Translation:

Chorus:
On Mount Sinai, Moses
Gave us the pure and Holy Law
I Very pure, is he (Moses)
(Response) Mount Sinai
Humble, is he (Moses)
(Response) Mount Sinai
Chaste, is he (Moses)
(Response) Mount Sinai
II Small is he (Moses)
(Response) Mount Sinai
Full of love
(Response) Mount Sinai
Beloved is he (Response)
Mount Sinai

Translation:

I (Refrain) Emeth atah hathanenu
– Kemo sahar bethokhenu
Kemelkh at lefaneynu
– Yevarechekha eloheynu

II Belkhallathekha me-od (hathan) tismah
Bero mamon webro qemah
Wetizhekha lajazoth semah
– Wetil qodshe yebienun

III Yehi zarekh b’eyisrael
Weyokhmatashak kaghabriel
Wetobathak lekhol sho-eh
Wesimnon tob lekhullah

IV Temeim demim yevarechekhem
Weyarekhem wayarbekehem
Weyar-akhem le’eymekhem
Weyar-enu meshiyhenu

V Real tho-ar hathan misrah
‘Alay rosho kelil torah
Wekhallatho kitzor orah
Kemo shemesh be-arzenu

VI Hazak hathan bepuathak
Weghil wusmah bekhallathak
– W-et el shadda y-b’ezrat hak
Wegham yihye be’ezrenu

Translation:

I (Refrain) You are the true bridegroom!
Like the moon in our midst,
Like a king in our presence,
Our Lord will bless you.

II Oh (bridegroom), rejoice greatly in your bride,
With abundant riches and sustenance.
And you will merit the good fortune to witness your offspring,
And He will bring us His holiness.

III Your seed will be in Israel,
And your wisdom, like that of Gabriel’s.
And your goodness will serve all those who ask,
It is a good sign upon us all.

IV The Lord, who is all-knowing, will bless you,
And you will be fruitful and multiply.
And He will show you, before your very eyes,
The coming of the Messiah.

V See the groom appear in his (new) role,
Bearing upon his head the tovreh in all its glory.
And with his bride, a light shining,
Like the sun upon our land.
IV The royal one; the awesome one; the righteous; the helping one.
V The redeeming one; the righteous one; the holy one; the merciful one.
VI The Almighty; the faultless one; the supportive one; the resolute one.

8b) Bene Israel text (Marathi):

Sināy Dongrávar moshelā
Bene Israel (trad.) / Marathi
Sung in the call and response style with the chorus responding ‘Sināi Dongar’ (Mount Sinai).

Chorus: sināi Dongrávar moshelā
pawitra shāstra dilē āmāhālá

Transliteration:
I phār pawitra,
(Response) sināi Dongar namra āhē to,
(Response) sināi Dongar swachchā āhē to,
(Response) sināi Dongar
II lahān āhē to,
(Response) sināi Dongar prēm bhārīt āhē,
(Response) sināi Dongar āhē awaDrā,
(Response) sināi Dongar
III harsha kari to,
(Response) sināi Dongar nāchā lāglā,
(Response) sināi Dongar gā-ū lāglā,
(Response) sināi Dongar

Translation:
Chorus: On Mount Sinai, Moses gave us the pure and Holy Law
I Very pure, is he (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai Humble, is he (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai Chaste, is he (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai II Small is he (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai Full of love (Response) Mount Sinai Beloved is he (Response) Mount Sinai III Feeling joyous (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai He began to dance (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai He began to sing (Moses) (Response) Mount Sinai

9. Ėmēth Atah Ḥathanēnu (You are the True Bridegroom)
New Delhi 6 February 2005
Text: Ebyathar. Acrostic: Ebyathar /szaq ("Be strong") Melodic mode: nāhā: wand

One of the most popular wedding songs in the Jewish-Babylonian tradition. While not sung as part of the wedding ceremony itself, it may be performed in honour of the groom and the bride at celebrations for their engagement, or at synagogue, when the groom is called up to read the portion from the torah (Pentateuch) scroll on Sabbaths immediately before and after the wedding. The hymn may also be sung during the seven nights of blessings (sheva’ bérakhot) and festive meals following the wedding.

Following a short instrumental introduction, the group sings the refrain. Many of the verses feature vocal solos. Refrains are often punctuated by ululations — both vocal and instrumental (oboe and flute). The final refrain is reinforced with clapping in time — again with audience participation.

Translation:
I (Refrain) Ėmēth atah ḥathanēnu — Kēmo sahar bēthokhēnū Kēmelēkh at lēfānēnū Yēbārēkhekha eōhenēnū
II Bēkhallāthekha mē-od (ḥathan) tisMah Bēroh māmōn wēroh qēmāh Wēhizhek ḫalaxoth ḥēmāh Wē-il qodsho yeḇiēnū
III Yēhī zarēkāh bēyisraēl Wēboḥmāṭhēk kēgabriel Wējōbāthēk lēkhol sho-el Wēṣimān tōb lēkhullānū
IV Tēmim dē’im yēbārēkhekhem Wēyafrehkhem wēyārbēkhem Wēyār-ahēm lē-yēmēkhēm Wēyār-ēnē mēshīhenēnū
V Rēē thu-ar ħathan mīsrah ‘Alēy rosho kēlīl torah Wēkhullātho kēzēv orah Kēmo shēmēsh bē-arṣēnū
VI Ḥāzaq ħathan bēpūpūthakh Wēghīl wusmah bēkhallāthakh Wē-ēl shadda-y bē’ezrātakh Wēgham yiyyēh bē’ezrēnū

Translation:
I (Refrain) You are the true bridegroom! Like the moon in our midst, Like a king in our presence, Our Lord will bless you.
II Oh (bridegroom), rejoice greatly in your bride, With abundant riches and sustenance. And you will merit the good fortune to witness your offspring. And He will bring us His holiness.
III Your seed will be in Israel, And your wisdom, like that of Gabriel’s. And your goodness will serve all those who ask, It is a good sign upon us all.
IV The Lord, who is all-knowing, will bless you, And you will be fruitful and multiply. And He will show you, before your very eyes, The coming of the Messiah.
V See the groom appear in his (new) role, Bearing upon his head the tordh in all its glory. And with his bride, a light shining, Like the sun upon our land.
VI Be strong, bridegroom, in your marriage,  
And rejoice and be happy in your bride.  
And may the Lord Almighty be a help to you,  
As He is to us also.

10. Ya Nabi ("Oh Prophet")  
Pune 20 February 2005  
Text: Anon. No acrostic. Melodic mode: {ajam}  
This video-Arabic text, in the Baghdad dialect, was sung traditionally on pilgrimages, during Shuhubt (Pentecost),  
to the tomb of Ezekiel the Prophet, in Hilla, Iraq. The song also refers to a bridegroom, and is consequently also sung  
at weddings. Such references in songs that were originally for pilgrimage, may stem from the custom of newly-weds  
visiting the tombs of the prophets. The festive and joyous spirit of the song is emphasized, urging women to ululate,  
and men to clap hands in honour of the prophet. These  
sounds are heard in this performance, aided by the audiences  
who, with a little tuition, rapidly became expert in giving  
vent to the {kili-kili} sound!  
An unaccompanied vocal solo, in free time and sombre mood  
as an introduction, presents a contrast to the lively nature  
of the song that is to follow. The refrains are performed by  
the full group; the ululations are further emphasised on the  
mandolin. The repeat of the song is performed in the Iraqi  
{igrag} (or {jujina}) rhythm (5+5), introduced on the {dumbuk}  
and {bud}. Saeed Nathans {shtar} (finger clicks) accompanies  
the solo refrain in the new rhythm. Men's and women's voices  
alternate in the verses, and the performance ends with a  
return to the original four-beat timing, and with a little  
surprise at the very end.

11. Longa Nahawand  
New Delhi 6 February 2005  
Composer: Riyadh As-Sambati. Melodic mode: {nahawand}  
A rousing instrumental composition by the acclaimed  
Egyptian composer, Riyadh As-Sambati.  
As a genre, the Longa is composed in four-beat timing, with  
a number of sections, each of which is repeated. In addition,  
there is a recurring melodic refrain. The final new section is  
in Waltz timing, after which the recurring section returns.  
The Longa is a secular piece, and is often performed as the  
opening number at a concert. Sambati's composition, with  
its lively, fanfare-like opening, is sure to attract the audience's  
attention, at whatever point of the programme it is  
performed.  
This track features the instrumental ensemble, the melody  
instruments: {oud, accordion, oboe and violin}; and  
percussion: {dumbuk}, tambourine and {sharet}. The different  
sections contrast full ensemble playing with smaller  
instrumental combinations. Oboe trills often reinforces  
repeats of sections.

12. Mera Joota Hai Japaneer - Phir Bhi Dil hai Hindustani  
New Delhi 6 February 2005  
Singer: Mukesh. Film: Shree 420 (1955)  
Director/Actor: Raj Kapoor  
This song is dedicated to the Remembered Rhythms  
audiences in India. Despite now residing in Britain, the  
members of Rivers of Babylon make it clear with this classic  
Hindi film song that their hearts are still Indian. Two verses  
of the song are performed. The end of the song, in a special  
arrangement by Sara Mananseh for the India tour, underlines  
the heart of the song's sentiment, which echoes that of Rivers  
of Babylon: phir bhi dil hai hindustani - hindustani (But my  
heart is Indian - Indian).  
The end of this song, and the end of the concert invariably  
concluded in spontaneous standing ovations and cries of  
{kiikii-kii} from the audience - indicating the strong rapport  
that had been built up between all present.

TRANSLATION:  
(Mera joota hai japoni)  
Yeh parlool inglishanii  
Sar pe laal topi roosii  
Phir bhi dil hai hindustani  
mera joota hai ...

TRANSLATION:  
(My shoes are Japanese)  
These pants are English  
The red hat on my head is Russian  
But my heart is still Indian  

ALL TRACKS WERE RECORDED AS PART OF THE REMEMBERED RHYTHMS FESTIVAL  
February 2005.
VI
Be strong, bridegroom, in your marriage,
And rejoice and be happy in your bride.
And may the Lord Almighty be a help to you,
As He is to us also.

10. Ya Nābi ("Oh Prophet")
Pune 20 February 2005
Text: Anis. No acrostic. Melodic mode: 'ajam
This video-Arabic text, in the Baghdad dialect, was sung
traditionally on pilgrimages, during Shabihāt (Pentecost),
to the tomb of Zeekiel the Prophet, in Hilla, Iraq. The song
also refers to a bridegroom, and is consequently also sung
at weddings. Such references in songs that were originally
for pilgrimage, may stem from the custom of newly-weds
visiting the tombs of the prophets. The festive and joyous
spirit of the song is emphasized, urging women to ululate,
and men to clap hands in honour of the prophet. These
sounds are heard in this performance, aided by the audiences
who, with a little tuition, rapidly became expert in giving
vent to the kiliili sound!
An unaccompanied vocal solo, in free time and sombre mood
as an introduction, presents a contrast to the lively nature
of the song that is to follow. The refrains are performed by
the full group; the ululations are further emphasised on
the mandolin. The repeat of the song is performed in the Iraqi
irgāt (or jirginā) rhythm (5+5), introduced on the dambuk
and bu'd. Saeed Nathans 'abtān (finger clicks) accompanies
the solo refrain in the new rhythm. Men and women's voices
alternate in the verses, and the performance ends with a
return to the original four-beat timing, and with a little
surprise at the very end.

11. Longa Nahawand
New Delhi 6 February 2005
Composer: Riyāḍh As-Sambāṭī Melodic mode: nahawand
A rousing instrumental composition by the acclaimed
Egyptian composer, Riyāḍh As-Sambāṭī.
As a genre, the Longa is composed in four-beat timing, with
a number of sections, each of which is repeated. In addition,
there is a recurring melodic refrain. The final new section is
in Waltz timing, after which the recurring section returns.
The Longa is a secular piece, and is often performed as the
opening number at a concert. Sambāṭī's composition, with
its lively, fanfare-like opening, is sure to attract the audience's
attention, at whatever point of the programme it is
performed.
This track features the instrumental ensemble, the melody
instruments: 'oud, accordion, oboe and violin; and
percussion: dambuk, tambourine and shetān. The different
sections contrast full ensemble playing with smaller
instrumental combinations. Oboe trills often reinforces
repeats of sections.

12. Mērā Jootā Hai Jāpānēe – Phir Bhi Dil hai Hindustānī
New Delhi 6 February 2005
Singer: Mukesh. Film: Shree 420 (1955)
Director/Actor: Raj Kapoor
This song is dedicated to the Remembered Rhythms
audiences in India. Despite now residing in Britain, the
members of Rivers of Babylon make it clear with this classic
Hindi film song that their hearts are still Indian. Two verses
of the song are performed. The end of the song, in a special
arrangement by Sara Manasseh for the India tour, underlines
the heart of the song's sentiment, which echoes that of Rivers
of Babylon: phir bhi dil hai hindustānī – hindustānī (But my
heart is Indian – Indian),
The end of this song, and the end of the concert invariably
concluded in spontaneous standing ovations and cries of
kiliili from the audience – indicating the strong rapport
that had been built up between all present.

TRANSLITERATION:
(Refrain) Ya nābi ya nābi Ilhāf li ghiyābi
Nish'āl sīrī el-āsīl
Wunjūfū līn- nābi

I Ya nābi weyyānā
Hāthān weyyānā
·Endu bi'sōdt el-mīlāh
Yihfaqūhā en-. nābi

II Ya nābi qollōlū
Wushmī shilōlō
Ya niswān halihlōl
Wujāl safqū lo
Elīyyāhū han-. nābi

TRANSLATION:
(Refrain) Oh prophet, oh prophet!
Watch over my absent ones.
We will light the beeswax candles,
And we will make a pilgrimage to the prophet.

I Oh, the prophet is with us,
The bridegroom is with us.
At his home for the circumcision feast,
The prophet will watch over him.

II Oh prophet, tell him (your desires),
And light candles for him.
Oh women, ululate for him,
And men, clap your hands for him,
Elijah, the prophet.

TRANSLATION:
Mera joota hai japani
Yeh parloon inglishthani
Sar pe laal topi roosi
Phir bhi dil hai hindustani
Mera joota hai ...

TRANSLATION:
My shoes are Japanese
These pants are English
The red hat on my head is Russian
But my heart is still Indian

ALL TRACKS WERE RECORDED AS PART OF THE REMEMBERED RHYTHMS FESTIVAL
FEBRUARY 2005.
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Selected Discography

Acknowledgements
Tod Laffiche
Rishika Mehrishi


Credits
Notes prepared by and Copyrighted by Sara Manasseh
Editor: Shubha Chaudhuri
Recording
Raj Audio, Mumbai
Mahendira Dave, Oceanic Sound and Vision, Pune
Mr. Moses, Kolkata
Stage Door, Bangalore
M. Umeshankar, New Delhi

Audio Mastering and Technical Support
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SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY


LINKS

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- www.babylonjewry.org

CREDITS

Notes prepared by and Copyrighted by Sara Manasseh
Editor: Shubha Chaudhuri

RECORDING

Raj Audio, Mumbai Mahendra Dave, Oceanic Sound and Vision, Pune Mr. Moses, Kolkata Stage Door, Bangalore M. Umashankar, New Delhi

AUDIO MASTERCING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

M. Umashankar

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Todd LaRiche Rishika Mehrishi

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India is known as a land of varied cultures and great diversity. This is reflected in its music as in all parts of its culture. The classical Hindustani and Karnataka music are known throughout the world, but the myriad devotional, folk and popular genres are too numerous to be known. Not only are there at least four major linguistic families, with accompanying cultures and traditions, but a history of the numerous migrations and trade contacts through the centuries have enriched the musical and performance traditions. These challenge our definition of what we can call Indian music or the music of India!

The Remembered Rhythms Festival was a modest attempt to showcase some of this diversity against the backdrop of diaspora and music. Music is one of the most evocative elements in which culture is preserved, remembered, transmitted and transformed. Three groups from three diaspora communities – The Sidi Goma representing the African Sidi community of Gujarat in India, D'Bhajaa Sajj, a chutney group of the East Indian community from Trinidad and Rivers of Babylon, a London-based group who perform the music of the Baghdaadi and Bene Israeli Jewish communities of India participated in this event. Each group was accompanied by an ethnomusicologist who explained and contextualised the music for the audience.

These CDs bring together the excitement of the tour as three groups with varying and exciting music toured seven cities at the same time crossing the country, reviving their memories and roots for themselves as well as the audiences.

For further information on the groups, the tour of India, visit www.musicdiapora.org. CDs can be ordered either from the website, or by writing to remembered rhythms@yahoo.com.

Innumera Rhythms Project Director: Shubha Chaudhuri