נעמי ואבנר בהט

סִפְרִי תַּמָּה

שירי הדיואן של יהודי מרכז תימן

פיוט־לחן־מחול

NAOMI AND AVNER BAHAT

SAPERI TAMA

THE DIWAN SONGS OF THE JEWS OF CENTRAL YEMEN

Poetry-Music-Dance

SAPERI TAMA

(Tell Us, You Innocent One)

The Diwan Songs of the Jews of Central Yemen

As sung in the Manakha Community

Poetry–Music–Dance

NAOMI AND AVNER BAHAT

Interpretation of Poems: Shalom Seri

"E'ele Batamar"

בית התפוצות
על שם נחום גולדמן
Beth Hatefutsoth
The Museum of the Jewish Diaspora

מכון משת"ם
Halikhot Am Israel

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בבית מנחם ערוסי
(צלם: יעקב אבירם)

In Menachem Arussi's home
(Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

FROM MANAKHA TO KIRYAT ONO

The Manakha Community, Its Position and Uniqueness Among Yemenite Jewish Communities

"Blessed be the Creator who made this world, this city of Manakha". These words conclude an enthusiastic report by passenger David Ben Shmuel Karasso, who stayed in the city of Manakha in 1875 (Tobi 1976, p. 154). Further on, he writes:

> "...And on sunrise we arrived in Manakha (known as Haraz), I spent the whole day there and visited my brethren, who are almost as many as three hundred families, and have four synagogues. This place is very beautiful and vast, with extraordinary features. The country is very beautiful, the perfection of beauty. It is brimming with goods – vegetation and cattle and a variety of foods, and one can provide for himself for years there".

Yosef Tobi adds in a footnote (no. 11, p.154): "In the Jewish year of 5619 (1859) Rabbi Yaakov Sapir counted about 45 families and two synagogues in the city (See Even-Sapir A, p. 70, A), and it is clear beyond doubt that the estimate of three hundred families is utterly exaggerated. There may have been a typographical error, where it should have read 30 families, instead of 300."

The city of Manakha is situated in the Haraz mountains region, south-west of San'a, midway between San'a and the port town Hudeida. As far as the Jewish community in Yemen is concerned, Manakha formed a western border to the central heights of Yemen (Seri 1991, p. 71). A primary trade center for Jews from settlements all over the area, the city had a weekly market day, on which Jews and Arabs met for trade purposes. As to the number of Jews residing in Manakha, there are many different versions, ranging from several hundreds up to thousands. Yom Tov Tsemach, who stayed in Yemen in 1910, reported that there were 252 Jews in the city (See his report in the 1911 bulletin of "Alliance Israélite Universelle", published in French, p.160, No. 98). Rabbi Avraham Tabib estimated the number of Jews in the seven settlements in the Haraz district, including Manakha which was the principle settlement there, to be approximately 210 (Tabib 1932, p.28, No.33). Hirshberg, in the Encyclopedia Judaica (Vol.11, p.849), notes that in 1930, about 300 Jews were left in Manakha.

Yosef Tobi has mentioned the Manakha community as one of the mid-range communities in Yemen, which, albeit their inferiority to San'a, the capital, still functioned as centers for the lesser communities in the towns and villages in their vicinity (Tobi 1976, p. 154).

Yaacov Sapir, who visited Yemen in 1859, notes that Manakha is "situated on mountain tops". His description indicates that here, as in San'a, the Jews resided in their own quarter, near the Gentile city:

> "I ascended with them to the city of the Jews, in the big city of Manakha, to a small synagogue by a respectable man [...] and he went up to his shop, which was in the Gentile city, situated on the top of the highest mountain, a big fortified city, with a palace similar to the one in the capital. About forty-five Jewish families reside here safely outside the walls of the fortified city, with two small synagogues (because of the disputes) [...] The city residents earn a respectable living by their craftwork and trade, because there is a big market day every Sunday, for all neighboring vicinities, and the city is surrounded by many villages" (Sapir 1951, pp. 97-98).

In the book **The Heritage of Yemenite Jewry** (Tobi 1977, p. 69), an overview of the Manakha congregation is related by Eliahu Ben Salem Ben Yitzhak Giat, who was born in Manakha in 1906 and immigrated to Israel in 1950. In his introduction, the editor writes as follows:

> "The Jewish community of Manakha was the wealthiest in Yemen for the last few generations, surpassed only by the Aden congregation. Most of its members dealt in trade, and enjoyed a much stronger civil standing than members of other congregations. This was due not only to their better economic status, but also to the fact that the Manakha Jews did not suffer from persecution and riots at the time of the downfall of the Immami regime in the 19th century, since their region had been dominated by Ali El Makraki, the Daai [leader] of the Ismailis, who was independent of the Immami regime."

The informant goes on to estimate the number of the community members, before immigration to Israel, to be 600 (ibid.). As he mentions prominent families in the congregation, he notes among its scholars "Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, now residing in Kiryat Ono, Israel". And indeed, Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri died in Kiryat Ono in 1981, but the members of the Manakha congregation in Kiryat Ono still perceive him to be their teacher and mentor to this day.

The importance of Manakha's position as a transitory city between San'a and Hudeida, and its dynamic trade scene, had implications on the Jews' life there and the nature of their cultural heritage.

Menachem Arussi recounts:

> My grandfather came to Manakha from one of the neighboring villages. In the beginning, Manakha was a small village, a crossroads to quench the camels' thirst. Eventually, it became a center for caravans carrying goods from overseas, from Hudeida en route to San'a [...] The city was so beautiful, built in the shape of a donkey's back. The whole mountain was made of stone, and on that mountain there was another one, and another one [...] It was a junction, and its maxim had been 'Who is wise? He that learns from all men'. So they learned from everyone, and built a life of their own.
>
> Economically speaking, we always had a rain problem. When it rained, this was the best place on earth. When there was a drought, it was very bad. In our last seven years there – after the assassination of my wife's uncle – it rained all over Yemen, except in our district. Not a drop. People were destitute [...] until we left. I remember this city at its end, when the congregation was going to ruin, because the old-timers either left for Israel or died. The houses were deserted (in an interview dated August 8, 1991).

Immigration to Israel

Even today, forty years later, the journey to Israel is as vivid and exciting as if it took place just yesterday. This was not only a passage from one place to another, for which people yearned and prayed for generations. It was also a sharp, harrowing transition from a distinct lifestyle, rooted in a centuries-old tradition, to a new and unfamiliar lifestyle, which they had "entered into" (Jews of Yemenite origin often use the expression "when we entered into the country") out of zeal, but also out of necessity. Only a generation later, following a period of severe suffering and struggles, they could finally regard themselves as full-fledged Israeli citizens.

In a conversation on August 30, 1982, Manakha natives recount:

Aharon Cohen:

> "There was a war going on with Germany. We began praying, and kept wishing to immigrate to Eretz-Israel [...] In 1947 we already heard about the war between the Arabs and Jews in Israel. Everybody was scared. I had a shop. The Arabs came and threatened us: 'You are dogs, we will kill you! Go to Palestine!' [...] We heard that the Jews in San'a were in deep trouble, and our city was also invaded by Arabs from various tribes, who wanted to rob the Jews and riot against them [...] They spread a plot, that the Jews have killed two Arab girls. They wanted to attack us. They broke into houses, demanding food and money, in the houses of the rich they said: 'We want to look for the weapon used for killing tne girls'. We built a wall inside the house, behind which we hid all valuables we had in the house, for we knew they would come searching [...] In 1948, immigration to Israel began".

Shalom Keisar:

> "In 1948, they killed the King [...] We left Manakha for San'a; from San'a we went to Damar; from Damar to Rada; and from Rada to Beida. We arrived in the Geula [Salvation] immigration camp in Aden. There we lived in tents for a week, until the airplanes arrived and we all came to Lod, and from there we went straight to the Ein Shemer immigration camp, where we lived in tents".

Yechiel Tsabari:

> "In the beginning we were in camp A, barracks full of Yemenites. At that time, Rumanian immigrants arrived as well. They moved all of us Yemenites from the tin sheds and barracks into tents [...] At the time I did not understand what they did. Today I am pained by what they did to us. Then they began asking us: 'Where would you like to go?'"

Shalom Keisar:

> "Our rabbi was Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri. He was our Chief Rabbi back in Manakha and here from the time we arrived. He made us an offer: 'I have a moshav [cooperative village] for you; it is called Zanoach'. We went to the moshav. There was nothing there but tents, army tents. Whole families came. We were so happy. We said nothing. The managers came from Jerusalem and gave us a job – to clear away stones. They said: 'This is your estate. Israel has been divided, and this is your share'. That is how we accepted it. We worked there for seven years".

Menachem Arussi:

> "When we came to moshav Zanoach, all of us ingenuous Jews, they put us in tents in the middle of a thorn field. We had no idea what for. We worked, we began to clear the land [...] completely naive [...] For three years we stayed in those tents. After three years they brought tin sheds: blazing sun by day, cold as ice by night. We were happy: there was a door to close. Later on they built us houses. Those houses, Lord have mercy! But we accepted everything willingly and lovingly, with joy. Why? Because it was ours. When they came to our meeting and said: 'These are hard times in Israel. Our forefather Abraham lived in a tent, did he not?' And Mari (our rabbi) would say: 'Sure!' For three years straight we never left the moshav. We were ingenuous people. We used to bring water from the Arab villages. No roadway [...] And the man from the Jewish Agency said: 'You know, Gentlemen, the story about our forefathers, right? They roamed the desert for forty years. How long have you been here? Three years! You have thirty-seven years to go [...]'. Five years later we heard

the radio for the first time. Can you imagine? We did not even know what a radio was.

For seven years in Zanoach we used to work by day and guard at night, because there were many Arab armed infiltrators around. The people who came in this moshav were the cream, each and every one of them was strong and stout. After all, you know, only the strong ones survived Yemen. Seven years later, 75% of the people were already classified as welfare cases. People were worn away. A survey found out that 75% of the people were unfit to stay in the moshav. So they said: 'You must sign for a sum of money – the cost of the house, the working tools [...]'. For me, the hardest blow was when a friend of mine was killed by terrorists (the border was two kilometers away). [...] And then they transferred us to all sorts of transitory camps. Some of the people were already here, in Kiryat Ono [...] I was one of the last arrivals. One helped the other. For instance, Shalom Keisar, who arrived before me, wanted me to join, so he helped me in all sorts of ways [...] Some people in Kiryat Ono are called 'the people of Manakha'. Some came from San'a. We managed to connect them. One by one, slowly, we managed to pull them in [...]"

Yechiel Tsabari (from the Arhab district):

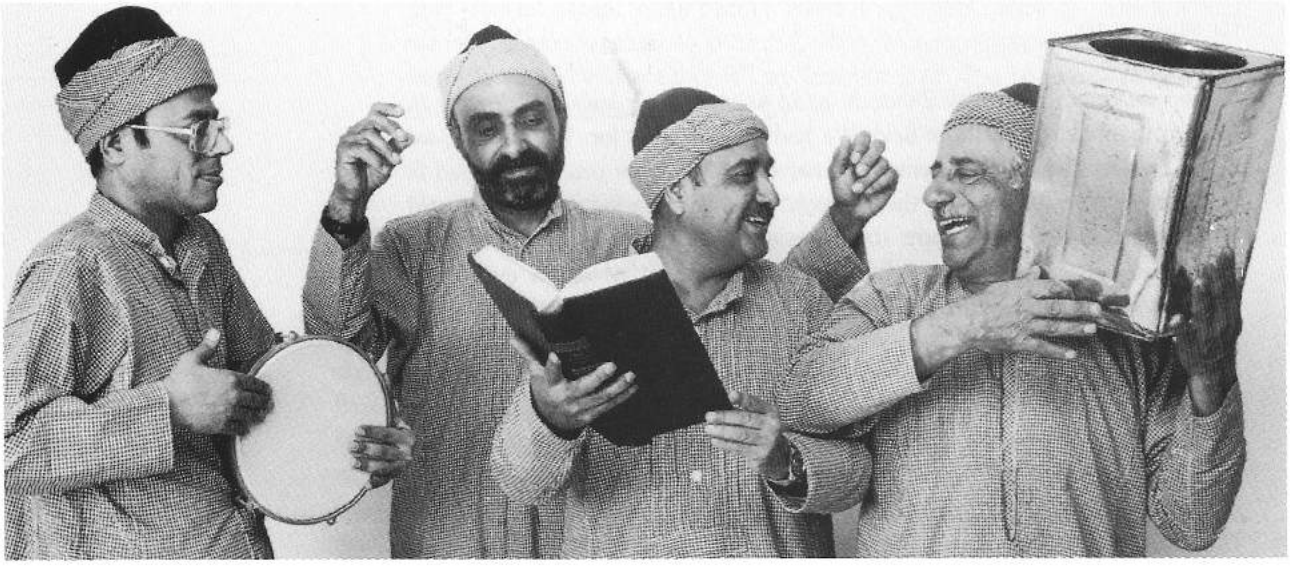
"Just as it says in the Gemara: 'Death rather than solitude' [...] The people of San'a are like Jews who came from Germany – each to his own [...] but those from Manakha, they like to be in company [...] Every normal human being likes company, to be together with others. The people of San'a say that dancing devaluates one's honor, that it is improper. The people of Manakha love to make merry."

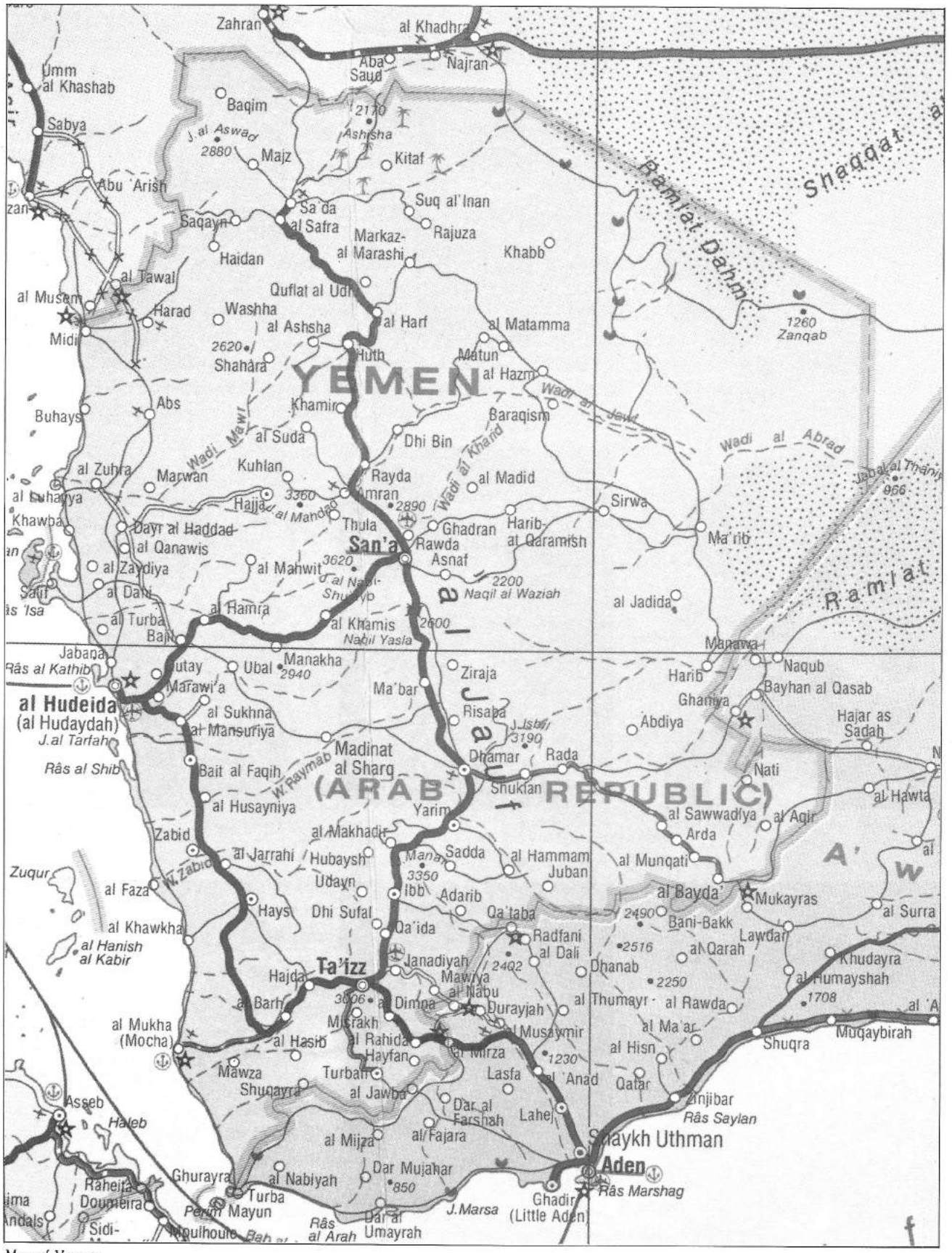
In a conversation held on August 8, 1991, Menachem Arussi spoke in the same spirit:

"There are only about 30 families from Manakha here, but we are the connecting link (between a total of 100 or so Yemenite families). And the reason is: 'This is my beloved and this is my friend' – you are my friend and I am your friend. Some of the people from San'a have a strong sense of self-importance, and others are commonfolk, and we are somewhere in between – just like in Yemen – we accept them all."

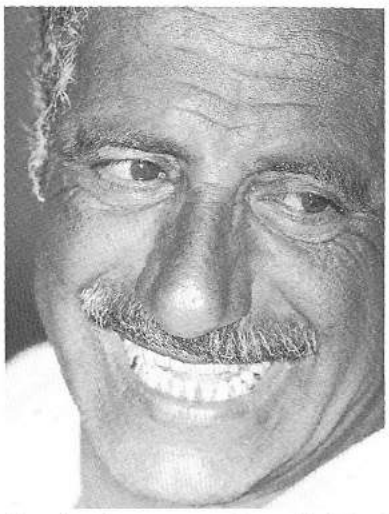
שירה ומחול עם הדיואן
(צלם: יעקב אבירם)

Singing and dancing with the Diwan
(Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

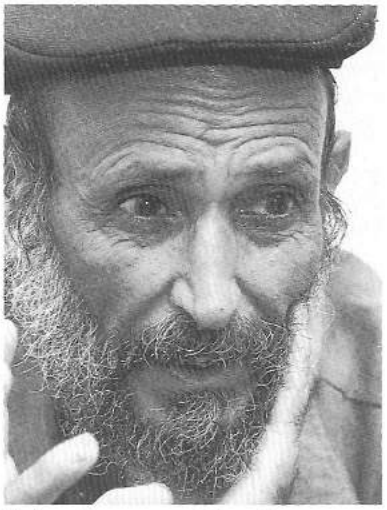



YEMEN
(ARAB REPUBLIC)
San'a
Ta'izz
al Hudeida
(al Hudaydah)
Aden
Shaykh Uthman
Zahran
al Khadhra
Najran
Abu Saud
Umm al Khashab
Sabya
Baqim
Majz
Kitaf
Ashisha
Abu 'Arish
Sa'da
Saqayn
al Safra
Suq al'Inan
Rajuza
Markaz-al Marashi
Khabb
Haidan
al Tawal
al Musam
Harad
Midi
Quflat al Udh
Washha
al Ashsha
al Harf
al Matamma
Huth
Matun
al Hazm
Shahara
Khamir
Baraqism
Buhays
Abs
al Suda
Dhi Bin
al Zuhra
Marwan
Kuhlan
Rayda
Amran
al Madid
Hajja
Thula
Ghadran
Rawda
Asnaf
Harib-al Qaramish
Sirwa
Ma'rib
Khawba
Dayr al Haddad
al Qanawis
al Zaydiya
al Mahwit
al Dali
al Hamra
al Khamis
Naqil al Waziah
al Jadida
Ramlat
Jabana
Râs al Kathib
Manakha
Ubal
Ziraja
Ma'bar
Harib
Naqub
Bayhan al Qasab
Marawi'a
al Sukhna
al Mansuriya
Risaba
Abdiya
Hajar as Sadah
Madinat al Sharq
Dhamar
Rada
Nati
Bait al Faqih
Shukian
al Husayniya
Yarim
al Sawwadiya
al Aqir
al Hawta
Zabid
al Jarrahi
Hubaysh
Udayn
Sadda
al Hammam
Juban
al Munqati
Arda
Zuqur
al Faza
Ibb
Adarib
al Bayda'
Mukayras
al Surra
Hays
Dhi Sufal
Qa'ida
Qa'taba
Bani-Bakk
Lawdar
al Khawkha
al Hanish al Kabir
Radfani
al Dali
al Qarah
Dhanab
Khudayra
Hajda
Janadiyah
Mawiya
al Nabu
al Humayshah
al Barh
al Dimna
Durayjah
al Thumayr
al Rawda
al Mukha (Mocha)
Misrakh
al Rahida
al Musaymir
al Ma'ar
Muqaybirah
al Hasib
Hayfan
al Mirza
al Hisn
Shuqra
Mawza
Turbah
Lasfa
al 'Anad
Qatar
Asseb
Shuqayra
al Jawba
Dar al Farshah
Lahej
Injibar
Râs Saylan
Haleb
al Mijza
al Fajara
Dar Mujahar
Ghurayra
al Nabiyah
Ghadir (Little Aden)
Râs Marshag
Raheita
Doumeira
Turba
Mayun
Perim
Râs al Arah
Dar al Umayrah
J. Marsa
Sidi-Moulhoute
Shaqqat
Ramlat Dahm
Wadi al Abrad
Wadi al Jawf
Wadi al Khand
Wadi Mawr
W. Raymah
W. Zabid
J. al Aswad
J. al Tarfah
Râs al Shib
Zanqab
Jabal al Thanin
Manawa
Ghamiya
Râs al Kathib

Map of Yemen

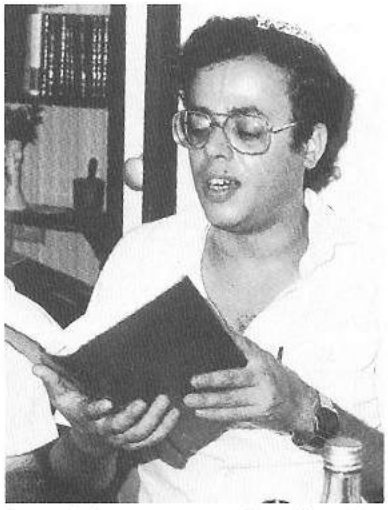


Menachem Arussi (Photo: Ofer Bahat)



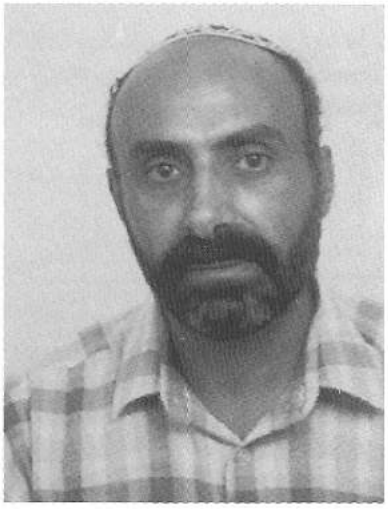
Shalom Keisar (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

The late Haim Ozeiri (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

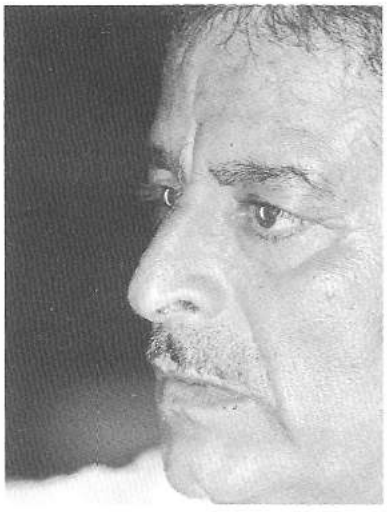


Danny Cohen (Photo: Ofer Bahat)

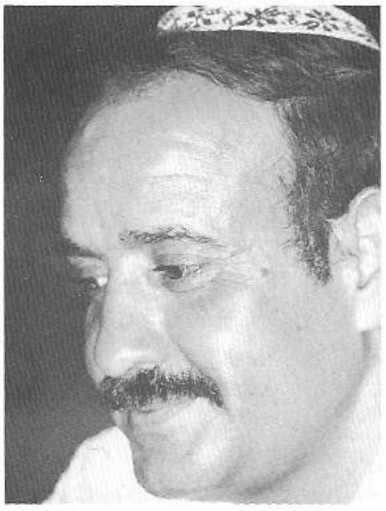
Aharon Cohen (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)



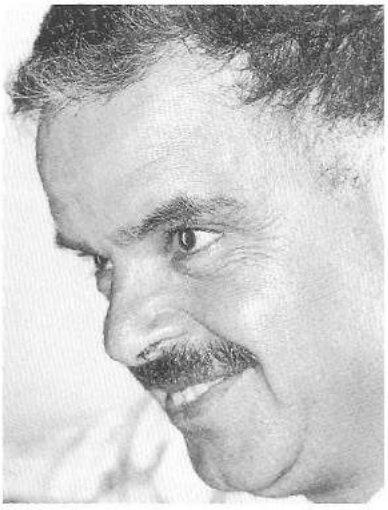
Yechiel Ozeiri



Yechiel Tsabari (Photo: Ofer Bahat)



Shlomo Yemini (Photo: Ofer Bahat)



Shimon Tsadok (Photo: Ofer Bahat)

THE GROUP

The term "group" refers to the ten or twelve men, who gradually became a permanent group, out of several families connected by an ever-branching network of family ties, and constituting an extended family. We preferred the term "group" to alternative terms such as "society" or "company", despite the shared connotations. Knowing the personalities in the group in view of their family backgrounds, and tracing their inter-relationship, are key to understanding the phenomenon of this group's long-term existence. Identifying each individual's role and influence within the group is also vital for understanding their ability to serve the purpose for which they grouped: performing the Diwan – its poems, melodies and dances – according to the Manakha tradition.

As attested by Manakha natives in Kiryat Ono, all the Jewish residents of Manakha were relatives. Their families were: Jadka, Giat, Dar, Danokh, Wachsh, Zabib, Tabib, Yemini, Yarimi, Cohen, Levi, Mualem, Mantsur, Mantsura, Seri, Ozeiri, Arussi, Tsabari, Keisar, Rana and Sharfi.

Group Members

The late **Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri**: The leader and mentor of the group members, a teacher to his sons and to all members of the community. A central figure in the Manakha community in Yemen and in Israel, he was the source from which the group members acquired their proficiency in the Diwan songs.

Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri was born in San'a in 1884 and moved to Manakha as a child after the riots in San'a. In San'a he was a disciple of Rabbi Yihye Kapach. He learned the Diwan songs from Shalom Giat. Certified as a Rabbi in Manakha by Mari Tan'ami, he served as rabbi and magistrate in the Haraz district, making his living as a jeweler. He immigrated to Israel with his family in 1949, and served as the Rabbi of moshav Zanoach. Upon moving to Kiryat Ono with his family in 1956, he was authorized as a circumciser. He passed away in ripe old age in 1981.

Menachem Arussi: Son of Se'adia, Born in Manakha in 1936, he immigrated to Israel in 1949, and was among the founders of moshav Zanoach, in the Jerusalem corridor. He settled down in Kiryat Ono in 1956. He is married to Kadia nee Levi, sister of Simha Yemini and Batya Ozeiri, who are both married to members of the group. He used to work as a foreman in a construction company, and is currently a security guard at Bar-Ilan University.

Menachem Arussi is the leader, the teacher and the guide, the central singer and most accomplished dancer in the group. Known throughout the community as well as outside, he voluntarily instructs and teaches children and youth in the Yemenite song and dance tradition. He learned the Diwan songs from his father and grandfather, as well as from the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, Shimon Dar and Shalom Tsadok, veterans of the older generation of Manakha Jews in Israel. He also learned to dance from his father and grandfather, from Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri and from Haim Eraki. His sons, Yosef, Daniel and Asher, are also members of the group.

The late **Haim Ozeiri**: Son of the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri and the late Batya nee Eraki, he was born in Manakha in 1937. A utility worker at Bar-Ilan University, he served as reader and cantor in the synagogue. After his father's demise, he was

deemed by the members of the group as his heir, being a source of knowledge and spiritual authority. He passed away after a terminal illness in 1989. His widow is Batya nee Levi, sister of Kadia Arussi and Simha Yemini. His sons, Yair and Nechemia, are also group members.

Yechiel Ozeiri: Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri's youngest son was born in Manakha in 1946 and immigrated to Israel in 1949. He lived with his family in moshav Zanoach and moved to Kiryat Ono in 1956. A mechanical technician by profession, he is married to Batya nee Tsadok, sister of Bracha, wife of Ratzon Tsadok. He learned the Diwan from his father and from Menachem Arussi.

Aharon Cohen: Born in Manakha in 1927, he immigrated to Israel in 1950 and resided in Bnei Brak. From 1952 he has been living in Kiryat Ono and working as a greengrocer. He is married to Yona nee Keisar, sister of Shalom Keisar and Rina Tsabari. He was Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri's disciple. His twin sons, Danny and Uri, are also members of the group.

Danny Cohen: Son of Aharon and Yona, is a member of the group along with his father Aharon, his brother Uri, his uncle Shalom Keisar and his aunt's husband Yechiel Tsabari. Born in Kiryat Ono in 1957, he resides there to date. He studied in a high-school Yeshiva, and works as a bookkeeper. He is married to Rivka nee Eraki. He learned the Diwan songs from his father Aharon, and is among Menachem Arussi's most prominent disciples. An excellent Diwan singer, he often functions as the lead singer in the group.

Uri Cohen: Son of Aharon and Yona, Danny's twin brother, Uri was born in Kiryat Ono in 1957. A graduate of a Teachers Seminary, he works as a teacher and educator. He is married to Rina nee Arieli (Wachsh). He learned to sing from his father and from Menachem Arussi, whom he assisted in organizing youth groups for learning Diwan songs in Kiryat Ono.

Yechiel Tsabari: Son of Shuker, born in 1933 in the Arhab district of Yemen. Immigrated to Israel in 1949, residing in Kiryat Ono ever since 1950. Works as a painter. Learned the Diwan songs from Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri and Menachem Arussi, and dancing from Menachem Arussi, with whom he often danced. Married to Rina nee Keisar, sister of Shalom Keisar and Yona Cohen, he holds an organizational position in the group. His son, Nethanel, is also a group member.

Shalom Keisar: Son of Haim, born in Manakha in 1925 and immigrated to Israel in 1949. He resided in moshav Zanoach until 1953, and living in Kiryat Ono ever since. Worked as a production worker. He serves as cantor in the synagogue. He was Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri's disciple. Apart from being one of the group's singers, he also functions as the group's drummer. He learned drumming from Yehuda Shar'abi and the Tan'ami brothers. He is married to Batya nee Tsadok, cousin of Tsiona Tsadok, sister of Batya and Bracha. His sister Rina is married to Yehiel Tsabari, and his sister Yona is married to Aharon Cohen.

Shlomo Yemini: Son of Shimon and the late Yehudit nee Magori-Cohen, he was born in San'a in 1942 and immigrated to Israel in 1949. A graduate of the Mikveh Israel agricultural high school, he used to live in Tel-Aviv, and has resided in Kiryat Ono since

1970. A graduate of a Teachers Seminary, he works as a personnel administrator. He first learned the Diwan songs from his close family, and later on from Menachem Arussi. Married to Simha nee Levi, sister of Kadia Arussi and Batya Ozeiri. Also holds an organizational position in the group. His son, Ron, also participates in the group.

Shimon Tsadok: Son of Shalom, was born in Manakha in 1937 and immigrated to Israel in 1950. He resided in moshav Zanoach until 1955 and lives in Kiryat Ono since 1956. He is a glazier. A disciple of Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, he has been dancing with Menachem Arussi since his childhood. He is married to Bracha nee Amrami.

Ratson Tsadok: Shimon's younger brother was born in Manakha in 1946 and immigrated to Israel in 1950. He resided in moshav Zanoach until 1955 and lives in Kiryat Ono since 1956. Works as a painter. He is a disciple of Menachem Arussi. Married to Bracha nee Tsadok.

Group Characteristics

Family Ties: All group members are relatives – directly or distantly related to each other, the result of family ties spanning three generations. Group members, all or some, are thus closely involved in family events of other members, and all problems, be they financial, health or other difficulties, are always brought up for discussion by the group in some way or another. Almost every gathering by group members for singing and dancing is attended by additional family members, whose sympathy and sense of fellowship regarding these encounters are evident.

The Leader-Mentor Figure: In the background of the group's activity there was always the figure of the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, who is perceived by group members as both their teacher of religious practice and an excellent singer and dancer, accepted by all as the supreme authority. Many of the group members were his pupils in their childhood, back in Manakha, and he went on to lead the congregation in Israel as well, at the immigration camp in Ein Shemer and in moshav Zanoach, where he served as rabbi. His authority was not limited to rabbinical practice and Diwan teaching, but extended to dance matters as well, as Menachem Arussi recounts in an interview dated December 26, 1983, and in a later conversation in the same vein:

> "Rabbi Ozeiri, God rest his soul, Haim's father, there wasn't even one time when I didn't dance with him. Whenever he got up to dance, I had to dance with him [...] and the dance had to be subtle, not just romping around and making merry [...] You had to dance on your tiptoes."

Neighboring Residence: The common origin of the group members is a prerequisite for its existence. Indeed, almost all of the group members were born in Manakha, and those not born there, have either joined the group through marriage with Manakha women who are related to the rest of the members, or were born in Israel to parents originally from Manakha. Ever since their immigration to Israel, the members made an effort to stick together and not to disperse, first in camp Ein Shemer, later on in moshav Zanoach, and eventually in Kiryat Ono. They were always neighbors and friends, maintaining a full community life.

A Central Personality: A group of this sort could not last for long without a central figure, accepted by all members as their leader, mentor, teacher, mediator and planner.

Menachem Arussi is certainly the most central and prominent figure in the group. Gatherings are held mostly in Kadia and Menachem Arussi's house, and only rarely in other members' houses, or in public places provided to the group for the purpose of teaching children and youth.

In an interview on December 26, 1983, Shlomo Yemini made this observation: "There is a central figure, this is very important [...] Every Friday we go to Menachem's [...] He attracts people [...] there are always more people, another one, and another one." Menachem Arussi is quite aware of his position and role as the group's cohesive agent, as he said in an interview on August 8, 1991: "I think that as long as I am alive, the group will continue to exist. When I am gone, it might be all over".

Menachem Arussi's personality is very prominent in the family and community life in Kiryat Ono. He is famous for helping youth in distress and as a mediator, and his social activities are very diverse. In an interview by Rinat Galili (See Galili, 1987) he recounted his family background:

> "My family is originally from a place called Aruss (where all the Arussis came from). I do not know when they settled there, but I do know that from there they moved to a place called Haime, and years later, to a place called Bnei Ktab. All Manakha people were immigrants, mostly from Bnei Ktab, and some from San'a, the capital, who joined those already there. My parents were born in Manakha. In 1949, when I was 14, I immigrated to Israel with my family. We arrived in Ein Shemer, to an immigrant camp, and later we were transferred to moshav Zanoach, together with some hundred families from Manakha and its vicinity. My father was sent to Rosh-Ha'ayin, due to his old age, according to the welfare authorities' policy of moving all the elders there. From Zanoach the Manakha families were dispersed all over the country: Ramle, Haifa, Rosh Ha'ayin, etc. Twenty of our families arrived in Kiryat Ono and settled down there.
>
> Many people died in Yemen. My grandfather had two brothers, but they died and he was the only one left. He had four children, but two died, and only my father and one of his brothers were left. My grandfather, Yosef, made it to Israel and died in Ein Shemer at the age of 111. He was an excellent dancer [...] My father, Se'adia-Asher, was also a singer and a dancer. He died in Israel at the age of 87, in good health.
>
> Singing and dancing were a precept in Yemen, passed on from father to son. It was an 'additional' precept: One had to have a vocation: jeweler, shoemaker, blacksmith, etc. When we turned seven, our father taught me and my sister to sing and dance. Since I did not have a brother, we danced together, especially on Saturday nights, with my father singing to us. In Yemen I absorbed my grandfather's dances with his partner. My mother was a dancer too. From her I learned the hand movements. And in general, I learned to dance from the adults: I observed, absorbed and danced.
>
> In Yemen I learned in a Heder [religious elementary school], to read and write, Rashi and regular script. In Israel I had no profession, although in Yemen, at the age of 13 I was already a professional blacksmith. When we lived in Ein Shemer, I was a cattle shepherd in Karkur, and later I was a sewer pipe cleaner. Later on I studied agriculture. When I left the moshav and moved to Kiryat Ono, I was a mover, and then a construction worker. That's when I began to learn the profession: at first I was a mason, then a molder, then an iron welder and a tiler, and finally I got a job at the Rassco construction company. Being a skilled worker, who only knew the four basic arithmetic rules (which I learned from my

children), I began to study the theory of the work, whose practical aspect I was already familiar with. One learns from everybody. I studied for three years, with many hardships, relentlessly, and was appointed junior foreman. I was already a father of two. I knew that I could not advance from a certain managerial level because of my lack of education, so I went on to study four more years until I received a professional diploma of a certified foreman.

When I sing, as precept and as hobby alike, the singing is mine. I have a job and I make an honest living, and I sing only if I am in the mood for it. I do not want any money for my singing, especially since it is a precept, for example at weddings [...] We still go by the Arab saying we learned in Yemen: 'If there is no circumcision or wedding – go and be crazy, Jew' [Arussi translates from the Arabic], which means that one never dances without a reason. I therefore dance only on special happy occasions, or on Saturday nights, with my children".

Defined Goals: The group members are integrated in the community life and have been contributing throughout the years in joining forces for different purposes such as fund raising for building a synagogue, charity for the needy, etc. However, their organization for the sake of singing and dancing has formulated a close, focused group, centered on Menachem Arussi. Their increasing awareness of the importance of preserving the Yemenite song and dance tradition, along with their wish to improve its quality and pass it on to their descendants, have directed the organization toward more structured meetings, beyond the family or community events. Before long, the group members became prominent among their community [and congregation] as an integrated ensemble of highly skilled singers, some of whom are also outstanding solo performers, in both singing and dancing.

The group's recognition by leading figures in Yemenite Jewry in Israel, as well as by researchers, has led the members to venture outside the congregation, to perform in academic institutes and public events, and even abroad, to participate in international forums and produce several records and cassettes (See Discography).

Teaching and Guidance: The group places great importance on imparting its heritage to the younger generation. Ever since 1971, out of his own initiative, Menachem Arussi has been convening a tutorial forum. Once or twice a week, in the evening, he teaches kids from the community songs from the Diwan and their accompanying dances. In addition to the mandatory schooling, children of the community, in different age groups, take afternoon lessons from the Mari (a teacher in a Yemenite religious school) in reading the Holy Scriptures according to Yemenite tradition, including biblical accents (cantillation signs). The liturgical aspect of the Yemenite tradition is thus taught in voluntary and optional forums, yet most children attend them. Learning the songs is mostly achieved by listening and memorizing, and dances by observation and imitation. The group members are involved in the organization of these activities, so that the disciples of the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri keep on learning from each other and teaching the youth. This atmosphere of mutual learning is one of the group's key elements.

Team Spirit and Functional Division: The relationships between group members are based on their recognition of each member's unique personality – acknowledging both the strengths that benefit the entire group and the weaknesses, to which they always refer humorously, without ignoring them. The existing functional division has evolved naturally, and when one of the members is unable to function, there is always a temporary stand-in available. Menachem Arussi is the supreme authority, deciding who dances and who sings, and is always consulted on all matters. Key decisions are always

discussed by all the members, and the arbiter, whose opinion is accepted by everyone, is usually Menachem Arussi.

Preservation and Documentation: As mentioned above, the group members are acutely aware of the urgent need to preserve their spiritual and artistic heritage. Being realistic, they also accept the need to utilize every possible means available through modern technology, to ensure the long-term quality of the documentation and preservation efforts, and their ready acceptance by the younger generations.

Family and Teaching Ties

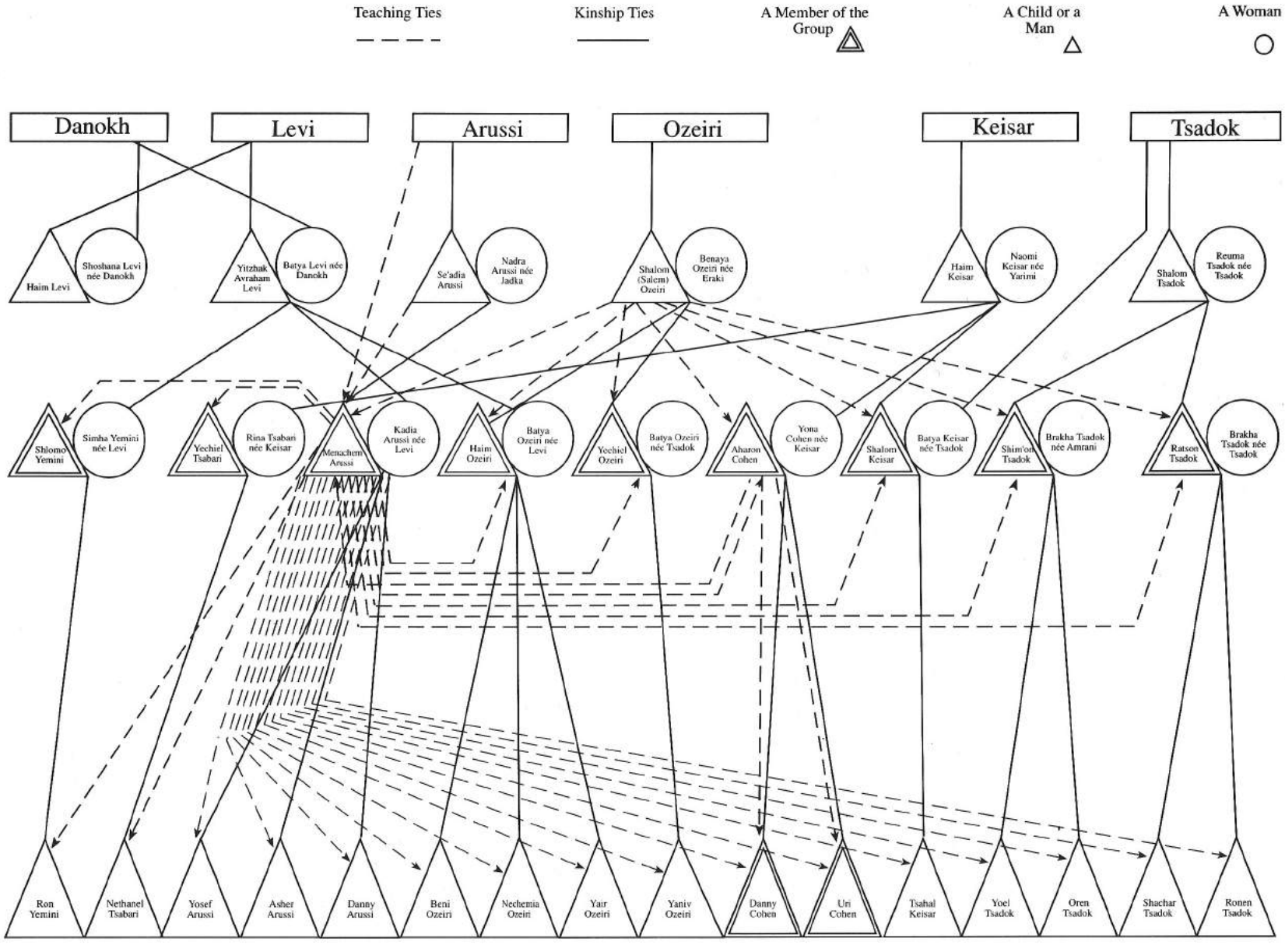
The following diagram illustrates the family and teaching ties spanning three generations.

The first generation is the fathers, who were born in Yemen and immigrated to Israel as adults ["On Eagle Wings", as the campaign was called]. The intermediate generation is that of the group members, who immigrated from Yemen in their childhood and youth, and whose character and inner world have been molded both in Yemen and in Israel. The third generation is the sons, who were born in Israel and learned the Yemenite-Manakha tradition here from their fathers and from Menachem Arussi. Nowadays, some of them are adults, with families, and are members of the group, and others have participated, or are currently participating, in the tutorial groups.

The **family relations**, which are marked by a continuous line, have originated in the marriage of the two Danoch sisters to the two Levi brothers. Three of Benaya-Batya (neé Danoch) and Avraham Yitzhak Levi's daughters are married to group members: Kadia is married to Menachem Arussi, Batya is the widow of the late Haim Ozeiri, and Simha is married to Shlomo Yemini. Another kinship point is the Keisar family: Shalom Keisar married Batya nee Tsadok, who is related to the fathers' generation of brothers Shimon and Ratzon Tsadok. Shalom Keisar's sisters are also married to members of the group: Yona is married to Aharon Cohen, and their sons Danny and Uri are members as well. Rina is married to group member Yechiel Tsabari.

The **teaching ties**, represented by dotted lines, clearly highlight each generation's central figure: in the fathers' generation it is the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri. Apart from being a leader and a mentor to the entire congregation, he has also been a teacher to his sons Haim and Yechiel Ozeiri, to Menachem Arussi and the rest of their generation. In the group's generation the central figure is Menachem Arussi, who has both taught his own peers and learned from them, and is the outstanding teacher of the young generation, all of whom are his disciples. Menachem Arussi himself has learned from his ancestors, his father and grandfather, and from Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri. In the sons' generation, only the names of those who participated in Menachem Arussi's tutorial groups, and in the group activities are mentioned. Names of sons and daughters who have not taken an active and ongoing part in the learning activities are not mentioned.

Kinship and Teaching Ties in the group



Menachem Arussi Dancing (1979)

מנחם ערוסי רוקד (1979)

THE DIWAN: POETRY, MELODY, DANCE

The Diwan is one of Yemenite Jewry's three basic books: The *Taj* is the Pentateuch with Unkelos translation and interpretations; the *Tikhlal* is the daily and holidays prayer book, both of which are liturgical; the *Diwan* is a paraliturgical collection of songs concerning Jewish holidays, events in Jewish history, and the longing for salvation in Zion, for use at home, in family and in congregational forums.

There were no printing houses in Yemen, so that all the books were handwritten and copied by hand. While prayer books were written only by authorized scribes of Holy Scriptures, the Diwan could be copied by anyone. Printed Diwans have been introduced only in Israel, and they currently replace the handwritten books. The Diwan is written entirely in Hebrew letters, but contains three languages: Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic (see ***Amallel Shir, Hafetz Haim***, and Ratzhabi, 1968, pp. 30-46; 1988, pp. 11-45). Indeed, the practice of mixing languages in Hebrew poetry had already begun in medieval Spain (see Idelsohn, 1925, p. 13), but it is particularly widespread in the Diwan poetry of Yemenite Jews. Language mixing may occur in various ways: sometimes entire songs in the same group are written in different languages and appear next to each other. In other instances, whole stanzas of one song are written in one language and other stanzas in another, and there are also instances of alternating Hebrew and Arabic verses, or even hemstitchs, as in the song *Sharad Manami* (92), and even within hemstitchs, as in *Amallel Shir* (43).

The Poets

The Diwan was created over a period ranging approximately from the 11th to the 18th century, as the earliest works included in it were written by the leading Hebrew poets of the Spanish Golden Age: Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, Abraham Ibn Ezra and others, while the most recent ones are Yemenite Jewish poets succeeding Shalem Shabazi. Many Diwans mistakenly bear the name of Shalem Shabazi, as if he was the author of them all. However, they contain many poems by other poets. Nevertheless, the majority of Diwan poems were indeed written by Shalem Shabazi, and due to their undisputed high quality and the great and justified admiration for his work, the Diwan in its entirety is sometimes attributed to him. Some of the Diwan poets can sometimes be identified by an acrostic at the top of the stanza, but many remain anonymous.

In the collection offered in this edition, which is the selection performed by Manakha Jews in Israel, forty-three poems were written by Shalem Shabazi. The great poets of Spain are represented by five poems, mostly wedding hymns, by Yehuda Halevi, and one Sabbath poem by Abraham Ibn Ezra. Other poets, mostly identified only by the acrostic at the top of the stanza, have each contributed two-four poems: four poems by Yossef Ben Israel, four by Se'adia (one is marked Se'adia Ben Amram), and two each by Avraham Ben Halfon, David, Shlomo and Avraham. Evyatar, David Ben Yossef, Aaron Manzeli, Yossef, Yehuda Ben Said, Israel Bar Moshe (Najara), Zecharia Aldahari, Hisdai, Yosef Ben Moshe, Yehuda, Shimon Ben Shalem and David Ben Zecharia Halevi have contributed one poem each. It is very possible that some of those poets, often identified by their first name and by their full name on other occasions, are one and the same poet. As mentioned before, the *Hallelot* poets are all anonymous, as

are some of the poets of the most common wedding songs, which might explain why some prefer to regard them as part of the *Hallelot* (see ***Amallel Shir***). A few poems (eleven) were written by unidentified (anonymous) poets.

The Diwan contains hundreds of poems, and there is no single person who sings all of them. The Diwan is a compilation, accumulated for hundreds of years in many different places, so that it represents an array of many local traditions. Some of its songs are common among all Yemenite Jews, especially the wedding and Sabbath songs, while others are performed only in certain communities. In Israel nowadays, there are mostly printed Diwan compilations, particularly ***Hafetz Haim*** and ***Shirei Harav Hagaon Shalem Shabazi*** [Songs of the Great Rabbi Shalem Shabazi], as well as small Diwans in the form of pocket booklets, distributed by various organizations, which the group members use as well.

Groups of Poems

The hundreds of poems in the Diwan are divided into groups, based on several criteria, but mainly according to their function and structure. In traditional Diwans they are presented according to their functional and formal classification, and this book follows this tradition. In the functional classification, the poems are presented according to the order of their performance, whereas the formal classification presents them in their alphabetical order, in the spirit of Diwan tradition.

In terms of function, there are two groups in the **Year-Cycle**, which include Sabbath and holiday poems, and two groups in the **Life-Cycle**, which include bridegroom poems and circumcision poems.

Year Cycle and Life Cycle

All the year-cycle and life-cycle poems, i.e., Sabbath, weddings, holidays and circumcision poems, are relatively short, and their forms are limited to the *Nashid* and the girdle song. These groups do not contain *Shirot* with *Taushich* (with one exception), which are a later, more developed and complex form, present only in the Yemenite poetry. The Shirot with Taushich, which are usually used for dancing, are included in the "songs for all seasons" group, and are integrated in the life-cycle and year-cycle festivities according to the singers' choice and the community's practices.

The shorter songs (*Nishwad, Hallelot* and wedding songs) are generally presented in their entirety. The longer songs (girdle songs and Shirot), are usually performed with shortcuts and omissions. They are actually a textual reservoir, out of which the singers select the desired stanzas according to circumstances. The common practice is to sing the opening and closing stanza, along with a selection of stanzas from the middle. Because of this practice, we opted to present in this compilation only those stanzas which the group members ordinarily sing. Of course nothing is permanent. It is certainly possible that one selection of stanzas is performed today, and a different one tomorrow; however, a tradition of preferences eventually evolves. As for the bilingual poems, in Israel it is more and more common to sing the stanzas in Hebrew and skip the Arabic ones, as the younger generation no longer understands them. We followed this practice. In each poem, the selected stanzas are marked, and the opening letters of the selected stanzas were highlighted in boldface. For the full versions of these poems, the reader may refer to ***Amallel Shir*** and other Diwan compilations.

Sabbath songs accompany Yemenite Jews from the Sabbath entrance till its end. It may be said that the entire Sabbath day is interlaced with these poems. They are

presented here according to their order of appearance in the Sabbath singing events. Once again it should be mentioned that these are but a few of the poems sung on Sabbath, only the part included in the Diwan. Thus Shlomo Elkabet's poem *Lekha Dodi Likerat Kala* (Go forth, my lover, toward the Bride), which is not part of the Diwan, is not included here, although it features prominently among Sabbath songs, as do other poems, which found their way into the pantheon of liturgical poetry. Diwan songs are sung at home, usually at the dining table, before or after the meal. They begin on Friday night and span the length of the entire day; Sabbath morning, afternoon, the third meal and the Havdalah on Saturday night, as detailed in the content. The order printed here is the one practiced by Manakha Jews, but it too should serve only as a general, flexible guideline, with possible changes. Other Yemenite communities go by a different order, and the Manakha community members are aware of that.

In poetical terms, the Sabbath poems are limited to two forms: half of them (7) are *Nishwad*, and the other half (7) girdle songs. There are no Shirot with Taushich. In musical terms, there are plenty of different approaches: only two songs are typically rhythmical: *IM ESHMERA SHABAT* (8), which is a girdle song, and *LANER VELIVSAMIM* (13), which is a *nashid*. All the others are rhythmically more freeform, although they too may be divided into two sub-groups: completely improvisational, and relatively freeform.

Holiday songs feature very little in the Diwan. This does not mean that there is less singing during the holidays. On the contrary, but in the holidays, most of the songs are liturgical poems, which are not included in the Diwan, but mostly in the Tikhlal, along with songs for all seasons from the Diwan. Some of the melodies of the liturgical poems are used for some Diwan poems as well. For example, the poem *Atzula Lefanim Bekhise Aravot* by Avraham Ibn Ezra, is part of the Tikhlal, but it is included in certain Diwans as an appendix (see The Book of Poems by Rabbi Shalem Shabazi), and its melodies are used for several Diwan poems, mostly the wedding songs.

In this group, as in the Sabbath poems, there are only *Nishwad* and girdle songs, with one, *AGIL VE'ESMACH* (18), being a bit of both, and the only one in this collection with a bolting rhyme that is more than a rhyme: the last hemistich of all stanzas is the same: *BEYOM HAPESACH*. Only two of this group are typically rhythmical, both holiday songs: *SHADAY EL MA NORA* (16) and *SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM* (17), while the rest have a free rhythm and improvisational style.

Wedding Songs accompany wedding ceremonies in their entirety. There are specific wedding songs for the ceremony and other events in the course of the celebration, which are presented here. But there are many other songs, *Nishwad*, girdle songs and Shirot, and of course all the wedding's Hallelot, which are customarily performed at the wedding ceremonies and during the seven days of festivities. Wedding songs are the oldest in the Diwan, as attested both by the fact that four of them were written by Yehuda Halevi, one of the great poets of medieval Spain, whose poems appear in the most ancient Diwan compilations in Yemen, and by the very popular style in which some of them are written, i.e., several phrases in which one word keeps changing in alphabetical order: *Ahuv, Barukh, Gibor, Dagul*, etc. These are *AHUV YEVARECH HECHATAN* (26), *AHUV MEHAR HAMOR* (27), *ASHIRA LE'AHUV* (29), constituting a unique group that defies poetical classification (in the ***Amallel Shir*** Diwan, these songs are classified as Hallelot). Functionally, these songs are used as **Zaffa** or **Chaduya**, i.e., songs of joy, which are sung during the bridegroom's haircut ceremony and his delivery to the wedding ceremony.

The songs are presented here according to their order of appearance in the wedding events, which begin on the evening of the Saturday preceding the wedding. The songs performed then are usually *ILAH ALKUL* (22), as well as *ASABICH KHALKI* (21), which are mainly praise to the Lord. During that evening, various other Shirot are sung, which are suitable for all occasions (*IM NIN'ALU*, etc.) and various Hallelot.

The following Wednesday is the Halaka Day: the bridegroom gets his haircut for the wedding. There are specific songs for the occasions, *Zaffa* and *Chaduya*: *AT BEIN 'ATSEI 'EDEN* (23), *LEFELACH HARIMON* (24), *RE'ACH HADAS* (31), *AYELET CHEN* (25), *BO LESHALOM CHATAN* (30), *EMET ATA CHATANENU* (28), *AHUV YEVARECH HECHATAN* (26), *AHUV MEHAR HAMOR* (27), *ASHIRA LE'AHUV* (29).

Thursday is the wedding day. In the afternoon, before the ceremony, the guests convene at the bridegroom's house and sing a free selection of Diwan songs, and in the evening, after the marriage ceremony, they sing all the wedding songs, *Zaffa* and *Chaduya*, as described above.

On Saturday the bridegroom is called up to the reading of the Torah. The song *SHELOMOT YAGI'U* (32), whose words are fit for the occasion, is performed.

The following Monday is the day of the ritual feast at the bridegroom's parents' house. During the event, it is customary to sing *CHATAN TENA HODAKH* (33) and *CHATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO* (34). Many Hallelot are sung during the ritual feast, at a certain logical order: the first Hallel (Praise) is to the Creator of the world: *AHALEL LE'ELI* (93), or *AHALEL LEYACHID HAMEYUCHAD* (94), etc.; the second Hallel is to the bridegroom, one of the Hallelot beginning with the words *HECHATAN HAZE*; the third Hallel is the guests' congratulating the master of the house; the fourth is the master of the house congratulating the guests; *HACHAVERIM HAELU TITBARKHU* (96); the fifth is the joint blessing: *HINE MA TOV* (102); the sixth is again praise to the Lord: *VEYISHROK LEHOSHI'ENU* (103), etc.

During the seven days of festivities, the song *MEHADAR CHATAN VEKHALA* (35) is added to all the other songs.

In terms of **structure**, the songs are divided into forms: *Shir* (song, *Nashid* in Arabic, and *Nishwad* in the plural form), *Shira* (poem, and in the plural form: *Shirot*), *Hallel* (Praise, and in the plural form: *Hallelot*), along with several other intermediate or unique forms. The majority of Diwan songs are *Shirot*, which may be divided into two sub-groups, based on their poetic structure: Shirot with Taushich and Girdle-song-type Shirot.

The **Songs** (*Nishwad*) are relatively short (4-11 verses each), and in terms of rhyming, they are the descendants of the Spanish Qasida, having an identical bolting rhyme at the end of every verse. But contrary to the Qasida, which is a long epic poem, the *Nashid* is a short, introductory poem. Although it is a complete and independent poem, its main function is an introduction to the long Shira to follow.

The songs are all written in Hebrew, with a few exceptions, in which Arabic and Aramaic are interlaced. The songs end with the opening word *Ana* (Please), or the acronym AAA, both of which stand for the blessing: "Please, Lord, save us; Please, Lord, make us successful" (Psalms 118, 25), which is said after the Nashid, in transition to the Shira that generally follows.

Most songs consist of two hemistichs, a "door" and a "close". The close is the "bolting" rhyme, but sometimes all the "doors" (opening rhymes) also rhyme, as, for example, in the poems *AHAVAT HADASA* (37), *EHYE ASHER EHYE* (38), *AYUMATI TE'ORER HAYESHENIM* (40), *AKAVE CHASDEKHA* (45), *YASHKEF ELOHIM* (50), *ABU YEHUDA YAKUL* (36) and *BILA ALAIKH YA TAIR* (46).

Some *Nishwad* consist of four hemistichs, and may be regarded as a transitional form to the Girdle song (the term "stanza" in a Golden Age poem refers to a verse in the Qasida): the first three hemistichs of every stanza rhyme with each other, while the last hemistich rhymes with the "guide" (opening rhyme) of the entire poem in 'bolting' fashion, as in *AGIL VE'ESMACH* (18) and *ODE LE'ELI* (39).

From a functional point of view, the short poems' category includes two other forms: *Zaffa* and *Chaduya*, both in the wedding songs' group. These songs are characterized not formally, but by their function: *Zaffa* is sung as a procession song while the bridegroom or the bride are delivered to the location of the ceremony, and the *Chaduya* is a general song of joy. These songs include many greeting songs, in which one word is successively changed in alphabetical order: *Ahuv, Barukh, Gibor, Dagul*, etc.

Girdle Poems are an ancient form, originating in the Spanish Golden Age, and they usually consist of stanzas of four rhyming verses. The opening first stanza (sometimes preceded by a short "guide" of one or two verses), provides the bolting rhyme for all the stanzas in the poem, rendering its uniformity. All the other stanzas have their own internal rhyming, but their closing verse always rhymes with the opening guide.

The long ***Shirot*** with *Taushich* are a distinct form of Yemenite Jewish poetry. The stanzas in this poetic form are usually longer, 8-10 verses, and more diverse: the first and last verses are longer, consisting of two hemistichs (door and bolt), and vary in meter. In the middle there is the *Taushich*: three short verses consisting of one hemistich each. Here too, each stanza has its own internal rhyming, but the closure (last one or two verses) rhymes with the opening stanza. There are various formulations for this structure regarding the number of verses, length and meter; its structure principle is, however, constant.

The ***Hallelot*** are the final blessing, addressed to all the participants, with an occasional specific address to a certain figure: the host, the bridegroom, the circumcised baby, etc. The *Hallel* is a rhyming prose, and unlike the rest of the Diwan poems, it is non-metric, with varying verse lengths. There are no *Hallelot* in Arabic in the Diwan. The majority of the *Hallelot* are in Hebrew, with few in Aramaic. The closing verse of the *Hallel* is often a biblical quotation, and it seems that the *Hallelot* were originally devised as a rhyming elaboration of that closure.

Hallelot are a form unique to Yemenite Jews, not to be found among other Jewish communities. Avraham Zvi Idelsohn has already noted (1923, Hebrew edition, p. 12) that "there is no such form in the Hebrew poetry". Hallelot are mostly sung as a solemn finale of the sequence Nashid-Shira-Hallel, but they are sometimes performed independently, especially on ceremonial events, such as the ritual feast, which is part of the wedding events. Despite the fact that the Hallel is relatively short, usually about one minute, it carries great importance. This must be among the most ancient and popular forms, as attested by its nature, which is more religious than other Diwan forms (Bahat, 1986).

All Hallelot have a typical structure: The opening is usually actual praise, directed at the celebrants or the Lord. Then there is mention of biblical figures, such as Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov, Moshe and Aharon, Shmuel, Hannah and Elkana, Yehuda and Ephraim, Eli, Kalev Ben Yefuneh, David, Shlomo, Hezekya, etc. Biblical events are alluded to, as well as observance of religious commandments, and the longings for salvation in Zion.

The Hallelot contain praises addressed at various figures, depending on the nature of the event and the celebrants. First and foremost is the Lord, creator of the universe, who is addressed in many appellations: *Eli* (My God), *Marei Malkhaya (The Lord of Kings) Yachid Hameyuchad* (One and Special), *Melekh Elion* (Supreme King), etc. At weddings, the Hallel is a tribute to the bridegroom, at circumcisions it is the baby or his father, and in other festivities, the host or the owner of this house, these friends, venerable teachers, all of these guests, etc., are the subject of the Hallel. All Hallelot begin and end with the word "VeHaleluya" (and praise the Lord), which also ends the Shirot, indicating that after the Shira one must move on to the Hallel.

The number of common Hallelot is around thirty (there are 31 Hallelot in the *Amallel Shir* Diwan and 28 in the *Hafetz Haim* Diwan), but this number does not imply that the same people sing all of them. Experience indicates that any group of people accustomed to singing together frequently, eventually develops a preference for certain Hallelot, which they all know by heart, and to which they keep returning. From all the Hallelot mentioned above, members of the group which is the subject of our study are used to sing sixteen Hallelot, out of which four or five are the most frequently sung. These sixteen Hallelot were recorded by us many times through the years, enabling us to discern the singing principles pertaining to all Hallelot.

The Meters

The variety of poetical meters in the Diwan is great, including all of the meters common in the Spanish poetry, along with new meters which are variants of Spanish poetry or their derivatives.

There are some poems in the Diwan in the **syllable meter** (syllables in the modern sense of the term. Some scholars count the vowels without the mobile *sheva* and the *hataf* (semivowel), with the same result). It is evident that all of these songs belong in the functional part of the Diwan, that of Sabbath, holidays and wedding songs (*Zaffa* and *Chaduya*), and are performed in free rhythm or short and simple melodies. Syllable meters were very customary in Spanish poetry in liturgical poems, and these songs in the Diwan are indeed the most ancient ones, mostly anonymous, some with alternating words in alphabetical order, attesting to their affinity with liturgical poems.

Nevertheless, these songs comprise only about a tenth of our collection. All the rest are metered in metric feet, with several variants, as found in Spanish poetry, along with new meters, found particularly in Shabazi's poems.

From the point of view of our colloquial speech, these meters are archaic and meaningless, since in our times we read and sing according to the tonic system, i.e., according to the accentuation of the words, and not according to the vowels' length. But when Yemenite Jews sing the Diwan songs, the poetic meters take on a crucial meaning, probably based on an ancient tradition, and they often determine the punctuation and accentuation, even if they contradict the sequence of the words. This issue is discussed in detail in the chapter dealing with the music of the Diwan.

DANCES OF THE DIWAN

Prior to discussing the dance in the culture of Jews of Manakha and Central Yemen, some fundamental principles must be clarified:

Dance-Event Linkage: The dance is never a show in itself. It is always an integral part of the congregational-family event. Dancing is a religious precept, intended to amuse and please the bride and bridegroom, and may be integrated into a range of different events.

Avraham Zvi Idelsohn brings an impassioned account of a Jewish-Yemenite wedding which took place in Eretz-Israel in the first decade of this century (1909):

> "If you have not seen a Yemenite wedding, you haven't seen a more uniquely wonderful joy in your life! The festivity begins three days before the wedding ceremony, with the shaving of the bridegroom. All the relatives gather and light big candles, made especially for the purpose of the precept, and begin to sing and dance, with two dancers performing as in ancient times, with body movements and hand clapping, and one beating the drum. They sing special shaving songs, and from then on, the festivity goes on until the seven days of the feast are over, every night until after midnight".

In his book ***Jewish Life in San'a*** (Kapach 1968), Rabbi Yosef Kapach recounts the Jewish-Yemenite lifestyle, especially that of the Jews in San'a:

> "The exquisite singers, summoned in advance, begin to sing. As usual, they open with Nashid, and move on to Shirot, sung with cheerful melodies and an energetic rhythm. Every once in a while, they change the melody in order to refresh and amuse the audience [...]. After the departure of the rabbis, the atmosphere lightens up and grows merrier, and young pupils approach the bridegroom and sit next to him, as do the singers. The youngsters take the initiative by showing off their singing abilities, all by themselves or with the aid of one of the professional singers. When the atmosphere is more relaxed, a few water pipes are brought into the room, and whoever wishes to draw on them, is invited to do so".

Separation between the Sexes: In Central Yemen, Manakha included, there was a strict segregation between men and women during the event. The women's dance is absolutely unrelated to the Diwan, as Idelsohn recounts (Idelsohn 1918):

> "And in order to freshen up, the Yemenites are accustomed to begin dancing while they sing, to the rhythm of the melody. Only men dance, and the women are not even permitted to observe the dance. Under no circumstances are women allowed to even sit in a drinking parlor along with men; the whole feast and amusements are for men only, while the women sit in a special room together with the bride".

Indeed there is a discernible mutual influence between the male and female dances, but this research is only concerned with the male dances, which are a key component in the poetry-melody-dance interrelated entity. Female dances are a worthy subject for a separate discussion (see Avraham and Bahat-Ratzon 1993).

Combination of Written and Oral Traditions: Dances are performed only as accompaniment for Diwan songs, with the book itself always held in the singers' hands. The book represents the written tradition, whereas the teaching of melodies and

dances is achieved through the oral tradition, by observing, imitating, memorizing and experience, as discussed below.

The Diwan is a source of inspiration and a trove of symbolic elements for the male dance.

The dance is a means of communication between the dancer and others dancing together with him or watching him dance. It is a cathartic experience, bringing about a release from the tension and inhibitions characterizing everyday life. It provides an opportunity for role playing and mimicry, change of identity and imitating both the real and imaginary worlds. In addition, it allows for the manipulation of symbolic elements. All these qualities are clearly narrated in Idelsohn's account of what he saw in Jerusalem (Idelsohn, 1923, Hebrew edition, p. 30):

> "Dancing while singing outside the synagogue is obligatory by tradition [...] and among the Yemenites, the dance is an important component of the music, especially in the songs sung at weddings, when a couple of dancers begin to dance, accompanied by drum beating and hand clapping. The dancing duos keep moving every part of the body, mimicking the lover and the beloved, which according to the tradition, as explained in the chapter about the poetry, represent God and the Jewish people. Their gestures reflect dispute, hatred, jealousy, anger and rage, begging for forgiveness by bending the head and bowing; the bride, representing the Jewish people, expresses longings and spreading of wings, whereas the groom, representing God, expresses anger and reproach. Toward the end, the groom grows compassionate, reconciles and draws nearer. The two begin dancing a fast and enthusiastic duet, while the singing grows faster and more spirited, the voices climb to a higher pitch, as explained above, until they reach the highest note".

The dance may thus be construed as an instrument, enabling the use of symbolism, role playing, mimicry and identity changes. This is far from a mere "translation" of the text into the language of movements; regarding the language of movement and dance only as a translation of the Diwan's poetic language would be highly superficial. In an interview with Menachem Arussi on August 8, 1991, at his home, he explains:

> "When I dance to the Diwan songs, it excites me. I feel it even as I speak now [...] Yes, I am connected with the lyrics. I connect the lyrics to the melody, I can beat the drum, I can both sing and dance, and if I know the poem, I know all its movements. And then I also know, my body knows, the part, which movement it should make [...] When you dance, you are more in touch with the melody; at that moment one does not concentrate on the lyrics; but I am aware of the general content, and it gives me a sense of elevation [...] Yes, it all begins with the words".

Arussi also spoke about his feelings while dancing:

> "When I dance, I feel absolutely healthy! And I enjoy myself! If I dance without enthusiasm, I get sick the following day [...] I need my heart, the heart itself, to dance. I hear each and every melody, and then, even without wanting to, my body makes its move naturally; whether it is the hand, or the torso, or the head, or the leg. That organ hears the melody and jumps with a will of its own [...] When the dancer knows the lyrics, he will dance with an aim, he will direct himself towards God. 'All of my bones shall say [...]'; every organ in the body says something [...] I want to die while I am dancing and singing, at the peak of my joy. I dance a lot, until I am breathless, for hours, sometimes up to four hours non-stop [...] Dancing is my nature, it's in my blood".

Elements of Movement in the Male Dance

Basic Step Patterns

Through our ongoing and documenting observation of the group dances for eighteen years, we have discovered that the male dance is based on basic step patterns (Galili 1987, Reuveni 1987). These patterns allow for a certain order of coordinated entry into a duo with a partner. More often than not, the dance involves two dancers, one couple or two, at the most, dancing simultaneously. The dancers are familiar with the step sequence, but it may be altered in terms of quantity (number of steps), time and space (step direction and length). The choice of patterns, their nature and change timing, is made under the guidance of the leading dancer.

In an interview on August 8, 1991, Menachem Arussi explains the basic step patterns: "The feet are the basis. In order to teach the children, I have marked myself a number of bases, from which I begin to teach."

Improvisation

While the step patterns are based on the constant and familiar practice, and it is they which lend the dance its basic rhythm and motion, the rest of the body, the head and the face, the palms of the hands and the arms, the torso, and the shoulder blades in particular, are used for improvised motions, based on each dancer's competence, ingenuity and proficiency in the movement inventory, and, of course, his ability to respond to the singing and drumming. In the same interview, Menachem Arussi explains: "It is very hard to understand [...] I conduct all my body according to the melody [...] I can make an unexpected move all of a sudden [...] All I do is listen, and my body moves with a will of its own [...] This is very difficult to teach."

This combination of constant and predefined patterns on the one hand, and improvised movements on the other, demonstrates the dancer's spontaneous capacity to respond, his aptitude in the basic step patterns, and his ability to cooperate with his partners, the singer and the other dancers.

Stylized Improvisation – Biblical Cantillations as Body Language Component

Notwithstanding the above observation regarding individual improvisations in the dance language, a stylistic framework can be clearly discerned in the male dance, which lends it a unique identity.

We have found a source of influence on the dancing style in the gestures accompanying the teaching of reading according to the biblical cantillation signs (Bahat, Bahat-Ratzon 1980). These are movements of the palm of the hand and the fingers, which were used as mnemonic teaching aids for cantillation reading. Fathers and teachers still use these gestures in teaching the children to read the bible, and they are so deeply imprinted in the child's inventory of movements, that they become an integral part of his palette of movements as an adult, incorporated in the common gestures of everyday body language. Most of the gesture is made with the palm and fingers, but the entire arm participates in its creation. Some of the motions are accepted and understood by all the members of the congregation, while others are more personal gestures, which embellish the verbal message and emphasize it during a conversation. In the dance, these motions were not integrated in their exact, original

form, losing their tutorial meaning in the process, but their source can still be traced, and their stylistic influence on the improvised hand gestures in the dance is unmistakable.

The following is Menachem Arussi's account, in an interview held at his home on August 8, 1991:

> "The use of hand signs for teaching the biblical cantillation is still common nowadays. In Yemen people were very precise in their Bible reading and never ignored even the tiniest punctuation mark. In the synagogue, the cantor supervises the reading to ensure no mistakes, and corrects those in error. I teach my own children on every Saturday, until they turn eighteen. I teach them diction, punctuation, the function of each cantillation sign and how it should be pronounced. This is common practice among all Yemenites. We call it in Arabic 'Kwait Lo', meaning: 'Mark to him'".

To conclude, the gestures used for teaching the biblical cantillation signs have been embedded in the everyday body language, and are the basis for the improvised hand movements in the dance, according to every dancer's talent, experience and personal aptitude.

The Structure of the Dance

The poetic continuum of the Diwan – *Nashid-Shira-Hallel* – is the layout and the basis of the dance structure. The *Nashid* functions as the introduction, a preparation and invitation to dance. In a sense, it is a first confrontation with one's dance partner. In the background of the *Nashid* singing, a play of movements takes place without any time limitations, with the improvised part larger than the constant patterns, as Menachem Arussi recounts in a conversation held in his home on May 1, 1984:

> "One cannot just get up and dance. It is not respectable [...] What's done in singing the *Nashid* is not yet the dance, it is a request, because the other person might not wish to dance, but I do, and I want him, because I know that we fit better together. So I go and ask him: 'Do me a favor, please get up'.
>
> I do it here the way the old folks used to do it back in Yemen. I remember how my grandfather would do it, truly for the sake of God! When they sang the *Nashid*, and the hall was packed with people, you could even hear a fly [...] Some songs deal with exile and express longing for Jerusalem. The general concentration on the singing brought everyone to tears. That was the *Nashid* [...]. People did not really dance when singing the *Nashid*, but here in Israel, there are some who use the *Nashid* melody for dancing as well".

Arussi also explained about the second part in the continuum – the *Shira*:

> "When the *Shirot* are sung, that's when the real dancing begins. There are three tempos [Arussi gets up to demonstrate the steps he always uses to begin the dance for the Shirot, a repeated three-step pattern. (See also Galili 1987, pp. 65-95]. Each tempo begins slowly and gradually builds up speed. The singer is the leader of the dance. He sings and beats the drum [...] I prefer our singer to be as original as possible".

There is no dancing during the *Hallel*. All present – singers, dancers and observers – engage in the singing of the *Hallel* blessing.

The Space of the Dance

As Menachem Arussi recounts in a conversation held on August 8, 1991, the

circumstances, which imposed indoor dancing, and the living conditions of a single medium-sized room attended by many people, have generated a unique phenomenon of chamber dance, dance in a room:

> "In Yemen, there would be two people, at the most, dancing at one time. More people would dance only when there was a kind of competition going on. Dancing was only done in a room, indoors. There was no other place, and the space of the dance was very limited. In Yemen, everybody used to sit in the room. There were no chairs. People sat on mattresses laid down on goat wool rugs, beneath which were mats. And so they would sit in a circle, supported by pillows. The children sat in front of their fathers without disturbing at all. The teachers were present, and they were highly revered".

In this manner a typical and specific dance style has evolved, rich in variants of movement combinations employing the vertical plane (Eshkol 1970, Galili 1987, Reuveni 1987).

Dance Direction

The dance is directed by the most experienced dancer, usually the oldest, who is regarded by his community as an expert dancer, highly proficient in the basic step patterns and renowned for his great gift for improvisation. The director maintains full cooperation with the singer through eye contact. Coordination between dancers is also achieved through eye contact, along with gestures: pressing of fingers, certain grasps, touching the hand, signs of directions, etc. This reliance on given patterns and the freedom to choose from them, place a very important and crucial responsibility on the director, and call for a quick response and high sensitivity on his part, as well as his partner's.

In a conversation on August 8, 1991, Menachem Arussi commented on the coordination between dancers:

> "As my dance partner, I choose a person whom I know to be able to walk with me. The way he responds, his agility, are important. I can tell right from the first round, whether he may be suitable for me or not. If he is not, I immediately move aside, run away [...] Even when I dance with someone I don't know. I am always leading and being led [...] I mean, if I realize that he cannot follow me, I immediately follow him, so as not to ruin the whole thing [...] Shimon, for example (referring to Shimon Tsadok, Menachem's dance partner in recent years), already understands me [...] Even if he does not do the exact same things I do – It's not possible for two people to dance exactly the same way – he might make a move that I cannot even imitate. If we are eighty percent compatible through the dance, it works. The ability to lead the dance depends on one's talent, and also on whatever he had at home, if he had someone to learn from".

The Image of the Dancer and the Dance

The status of the Jewish dancer in Yemen was derived from the general Jewish tradition with regard to the dance, which is generally unfavorable (Friedhaber, 1984, Bahat-Ratzon, 1982). In Yemen, too, the attitude toward the dancer and his status was highly ambiguous. In his book, Rabbi Kapach mentions the maxim common in San'a: "Anyone who dances demeans himself", but adds this remark: "[...] This, however, is not the case with the attitude to dance and dancers among the village Jews. They liked the dance and respected the dancer. Thus one may find among the dancers people in

ripe old age, who would not pass a chance to perform a dancing round in a bridegroom' s feast." (Kapach 1968, p. 110).

For members of the community, the dance functions as an organizational-ceremonial-entertainment framework, as well as a vent for releasing accumulating pressures and a means of expressing a sense of unity and belonging. Bear in mind that these dancers are not professionals by any conventional standards, yet they are highly proficient.

As Menachem Arussi recounts in a conversation held on August 8, 1991:

> "I can tell that the people watching me dance are having fun. I have no sense of pride, but I know they enjoy the moves I make, and it makes them feel good, very good. When I am finished, everyone tells me 'Bravo!', but I do not take it with pride [...] in Yemen the dancer was especially regarded. In San'a dancing was not respectable. Those who danced were considered frivolous and vulgar. Here, the attitude has already changed greatly. Today, the most respected and intelligent people in San'a are dancing. Today their children take lessons from me".

The image crisis, on both the individual and collective levels, which the Yemenite community had suffered following their immigration to Israel, had been long and traumatic. Menachem Arussi's account of the essence of that process is illustrated by an incident which for him marks a turning point, and a return to singing and dancing. He is used to telling the story often. The following version was recorded in 1977:

> "When I came to Israel, I did not want to dance anymore. I thought that it was not considered good here, that people did not want to see or dance the dances we used to have in Yemen. I thought I had forgotten all about it. One day, a woman I was not familiar with came to the construction site I was working at. Later on she told me her name was Gurit Kadman. I am doing my work, and she is sitting on a pile of bricks. I had no time for her. She told me that she had heard that we had beautiful dances and songs, and that I could sing and dance. I told her I was through with it, that here in Israel there was no longer a need for it . Then she declared, that she would not get off the brick, unless I promised her that I would resume dancing our dances, the way I used to back in Yemen. At that time I could not understand her point. It took me some time to realize, that this was important for the whole community, as well as for myself. That I, Menachem Arussi, should be what I like to be, and that I should not be ashamed of it, on the contrary. I am ever grateful to this clever woman, for helping me to understand how important it was. I will always remember her for that".

In the beginning of the absorption process in Israel, rapid changes in the lifestyle and shattered conventions, had pushed aside the dance. But the pause was only temporary, and the dancing and singing soon regained their standing in the life of the family and community. Nevertheless, this was not a full and complete recovery, as compared to what they had in Yemen (Bahat-Ratzon, 1978). In Israel all Yemenite Jews were faced with the necessity and the pressure from outside to fit in, to integrate in the Israeli lifestyle, at a speed that was often too fast for certain individuals or families to keep up with. They therefore were faced with the harsh dilemma of whether and how to maintain in Israel the congregational lifestyle and traditions brought over from Yemen. Solving this dilemma has been an extensive process, which eventually yielded the incorporation of song and dance traditions in the community's life.

The members of the community were aware of the fact that returning to, and preserving a living tradition of singing and dancing, would be a source of encouragement and strength, which would enhance both their individual self-image and their collective, family-community image.

In re-embracing their heritage they have challenged and defied the general trend, which advocated "to be Israelis" at any cost and as soon as possible. In addition, the interest from outside in their tradition, and the active response to their song and dance heritage, by the media and artistic milieu (Bahat, Bahat-Ratzon, 1983) have served to increase their value in their own eyes, and lend a kind of legitimacy to the idea of pluralism, in which many different traditions may co-exist in the mosaic of evolving and diversified Israeli culture.

Methods of Passing On and Teaching the Tradition

The teaching and learning of traditional practices in Israel reflect the general attitude to the values studied. In Yemen, the dance tradition was passed on from fathers to sons within the family. Manakha congregants, members of the group, are also highly aware of the value and importance of the song and dance as part of their cultural tradition, which is the reason for their children's classes initiative.

Menachem Arussi (in an interview by Rinat Galili, see Galili 1987) explains:

> "After my encounter with Gurit Kadman, I decided to try it out with my own children, and I began by teaching them songs from the Diwan. At last there was someone to encourage us, and we were no longer ashamed. Later on I began to teach my children's friends, free of charge, of course, and we learned drumming and dancing, in addition to singing".

In a conversation at his home on August 8, 1991, Arussi adds:

> "I remember my grandfather's dances. I had not seen him dance much. He died here in Israel. Later on I have watched Haim Eraki. I learned all sorts of movements from him, and I already danced with him. The melodies were passed on from father to son. It passes on just like any other trade: the father is a singer, so the son is a singer as well. I got the singing from my father. I have no idea where he got it.
>
> "In Yemen they only taught the children the Pentateuch. They never taught singing systematically. If you had a beautiful voice and were talented, you would memorize the singing at home time and time again, until you got it right. If you were talented, you would become a lead singer. Here, in Kiryat Ono, the Mari begins by teaching the Pentateuch and gives the children the right diction, and when a child comes to learn singing, he already knows the punctuation, the pronunciation, and the cantillation marks".

Teaching is achieved by oral communication and personal experience by imitation. The children read the Diwan and learn the melodies from Menachem Arussi, by memorizing and recapitulating the melodies he sings to them. This teaching method is based on the traditional practice of performing and learning the song and the dance as a whole entity, without analyzing the poem, the melody or the movements. Nevertheless, the adults would usually adapt themselves to the needs of the young disciples by limiting the improvisational element, so as to emphasize the basic patterns of the song and the dance. They also encourage the young ones to perform by directing them with a look, a touch of the hand or a gesture.

The Attire

The attire symbolizes, more than anything else, the change in the Yemenite community's lifestyle following their immigration to Israel. Among the members of the group, this issue has always been the source of ongoing debate: Should they wear the

traditional costumes while singing and dancing, or opt for modern clothes. A compromise was eventually worked out, and today dances are performed in ordinary modern clothes at weddings and other festivities, whereas on special occasions, such as the henna ceremony, traditional costumes are worn. Indeed, the use of traditional costumes is rapidly declining, and the group members use it only for demonstrations and performances.

To Menachem Arussi, the attire represents much more than a backdrop decoration (from an interview on August 8, 1991):

> "Regarding the traditional Yemenite costumes, I think that clothes make a big difference, they add a great deal. First, the change in appearance: in ordinary clothes, I am no different from the rest of the people. The Yemenite garment gives me an entirely different appearance, and with it I represent the originality of Yemenite Jewry, which is very important.
>
> "In Yemen they used to wear gowns of two kinds: *Antari* and *Galabia*. The Galabia is plainer, while the Antari is more festive. Both are made like a robe or a coat, reaching down to the feet. I remember my grandfather wearing a *Kaftan* (a kind of coat) over the Antari for special events, i.e., Sabbath and holidays, and it was even more respectable. In the winter, they used to wear a woolen coat, lambs or goats wool, over the Antari, called *Karak*. On his head my grandfather would wear a *Kufia Licha*, a hat made of many stitches and heavy with embroidery, similar to a turban made of fabric, with a metzar, a kind of head scarf on top. Only Jews would wear this."

Changes in the Dance in Israel

In general, the changes occurring in the dances performed by the Manakha group members in Israel, are similar to those in the dances of all Yemenite Jews (Bahat-Ratzon, 1978). What singles out Menachem Arussi and the members of the group is the fact that they have maintained the tradition of song and dance as a constant part of their life cycle, and in addition, they perceive themselves as "watchdogs" for the song and dance tradition they have imported from Yemen, including all the values that it represents. As Menachem Arussi confesses (August 8, 1991):

> "I said to myself [...] this is not the same singing, these are not the same Jews [...] I am glad I preserved this thing. I did not go bad, had nothing to do with these cassettes, with the business issue, and I kept this principle to this day. I am sometimes revolted by the things I hear, the way they sing out of tune".

Modern Israeli lifestyle is reflected in the Yemenite dance mainly in the length of time: the songs and dances are cut shorter, as Menachem Arussi recounts on that occasion:

> "In Yemen there were no time limits, no shortcuts. The songs and dances were performed in full. Here in Israel, I cut the songs shorter for several reasons. For instance, they do not understand the Arabic, so I drop the Arabic stanzas. For example, the poem *YA MUCHYI ALNUFUS* (65), which is mostly in Arabic with only two stanzas in Hebrew: right after the first verse, which presents the name of the song, I move on to the Hebrew part. Another reason for cutting songs shorter is that nowadays, people get tired and lazy, because they do not realize how good it is to dance. A dancer gets up, dances a little, gets tired and already he is sitting down again".

Abridgement may also be attributed to the performer's sensitivity to the audience's response. The bigger the audience, the shorter its span of attention. Menachem Arussi

is extremely sensitive to audience response, but despite his ability and willingness to adapt himself to his viewers, he would never do without the basic structure of the dance (*Nashid-Shira-Halel*), and he makes the necessary shortcuts without altering the basic format.

Arussi and his friends' dance is very personal and is controlled by the leader. However, today there are more and more events where the guiding dancer is not as prominent, and this fact has a great influence on the quality of the dance, being more repetitive and less improvised and diversified. The dancers stick to the elementary patterns of steps, out of their wish to maintain a uniform framework.

The trendy musical style generally referred to as "Yemenite Pop" is harshly criticized by Menachem Arussi: to the noise of electric musical instruments, scores of men and women dance the steps borrowed from the female dance (erroneously termed "Yemenite Step"), while holding hands in a circle or in couples; the movements are limited, infinitely repeated without variation. He argues that this is not the Yemenite dance as Yemenite Jews have known it, being completely bereft of its main qualities, i.e., the careful attention to the sung lyrics, the responsiveness to the rhythm and the melody, the alertness, the careful listening and attention to one's dancing partner, the ability to adapt the dance to the particular needs of the event and the social circumstances.

Other members of the group also express sharp criticism regarding the integration of Jewish-Yemenite dance elements into Israeli culture. On the one hand, they certainly accept the fact that Yemenite-Jewish tradition is an integral part of the evolving Israeli culture, but on the other hand, they perceive Israeli folk dances, though they may contain certain elements of Yemenite dance, as very far removed from their own. Nevertheless, none of them ignores the significant impact made by Jewish-Yemenite dance, and especially that of central Yemen, on the Israeli dance culture, through various channels.

The Yemenite dance continues to be an integral part of family and community life. Members of the congregation are aware of the need to continue teaching their song and dance heritage as part of cultivating a positive self- and congregational image, with the Yemenite "Old Country" origin as symbolic of the broader, more universal Jewish culture, which is shared by all of the Jewish people.

Patterns taken from the Yemenite dance language are integrated in contemporary choreographic works, such as those of the *Inbal* Dance Theater and others. Step patterns, movements, poems and melodies of the Jewish-Yemenite tradition have become a significant component of the Israeli folk song and dance scene.

Shimon Tsadok and Menachem Arussi dancing (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

שמעון צדוק ומנחם ערוסי במחול (צלם: יעקב אבירם)

Menachem Arussi and Shimon Tsadok dancing (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

מנחם ערוסי ושמעון צדוק במחול (צלם: יעקב אבירם)

MUSIC OF THE DIWAN SONGS

The Diwan poems were copied and passed on in writing from generation to generation. Every Jewish child in Yemen could write his own copy of the Diwan for his own personal use. The melodies and dance particulars, however, could only be passed on through listening, observation and imitation. Musical score writing of Diwan melodies was first done at the turn of the present century, by Avraham Zvi Idelsohn, and then by many others. The first recordings were made by Idelsohn, and most of them are kept at the National Sound Archives in Jerusalem (Idelsohn 1909, 1918, 1925).

The Yemenite-Jewish music has been extensively studied; however, Diwan poems were recorded and recognized not necessarily through this research, but rather due to their public prevalence, as part of the evolving Israeli culture (Bahat, 1983, Adaqi, Sharvit 1981). In the 1930's and 1940's, Diwan poems were included in several Israeli songbooks. Albeit they were usually published in an abridged and incomplete format, with false, inaccurate and misleading identifying details, still some of the more popular melodies were thus disseminated among the musical, note-reading public. Just as a complete edition of all Diwan poems is still waiting to be published, there is yet no complete edition of their melodies in musical notation.

Melody Sources

Who composed the melodies to the Diwan poems? We shall never know. Folk tradition never had an interest in the identity of the composers. Thus we are left with several hypotheses:

The poet may have written the lyrics to an existing melody, i.e., adapted them to a melody he knew beforehand.

The poet could be the composer as well, and he may have created the lyrics and the melody as one entity.

Someone may have composed the melody after the poem was written and published, and that melody has been accepted and used ever since.

Someone may have set the lyrics to music, choosing an already familiar and popular melody, having realized that they fit together; this could have happened at any time, either in the poet's lifetime, or generations later.

The first possibility is indicated by the melody markings written over many poems dating from the Spanish Golden Age. At the top, next to *Lahan* (melody), there appears the name of a specific song, popular at the time, mostly in Arabic, according to its melody the new poem should be sung.

The second possibility is based on our knowledge that some of the greatest poets (including Shalem Shabazi) were also renowned as cantors or prayer leaders, i.e., known for their musical talents, so that it is quite probable that they composed the lyrics and melody as one musical entity.

The other possibilities are based on a phenomenon still common today: existing poems are set to a new score, or fitted with a popular tune, that of a women's song, or of popular hits, to create a larger appeal for other, different audiences. Some such instances are included and specifically marked in our compilation.

Generally, however, we can only guess the source of the melody, except for a few cases, relatively from later periods, where there is sufficient evidence pointing to one of the above suggestions.

Teaching Methods

In Yemen, children were customarily taught to read from age three, and to write from age five. Any child could thus copy his own edition of the Diwan, and indeed that was the practice. Nowadays, in Israel, the children have printed Diwans at home, and they know to read them from infancy. Teaching the melodies is done orally: the children listen to the adults singing, and imitate them. Since the singing is learnt along with the dance, this topic is discussed in detail in the chapter Dances of the Diwan, under the section Methods of Teaching and Passing on the Tradition.

Instrumental Accompaniment

The Jews in Yemen had no musical instruments, possibly because these were forbidden as a sign of mourning the destruction of the Temple (Gamlieli 1975, p. 33). The rhythmic accompaniment to the singing and the dances was hand clapping and beating on household utensils, which are not specific musical instruments (unlike the Gentiles, who did play instruments): For the male singing, it was usually a common tin can, originally used for storage, and for the female songs it was the copper tray, which they beat with their ringed fingers. In less orthodox circles, a drum was used as well.

Melody Types

Diwan melodies are generally divided into two major types. The first includes melodies of a recitative-declamatory nature, with a flowing rhythm and structured as an improvisation over traditional melodic patterns, resembling prayer singing. This category includes all the Hallelot, many of the Sabbath songs, some of the wedding and holiday songs, and many of the Nishwad. Certain motifs or formulae are repeated in many songs, albeit in rich variations, as improvisation must be. Some of the songs in which this occurrence is most prominent include *CHATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO* (34), *YASHKEF ELOHIM* (50) and *MI NISHEKANI MINESHIKOT AHAVA* (51).

The second type includes rhythmic songs, well-defined in rhythmic and melodic terms, in which improvisation plays only a secondary role. These include all of the dance songs, i.e., the majority of the Shirot, along with some wedding songs, which are usually accompanied by hand clapping and drumming as well. As in the first category, here too, a continuous variation is discernible, which is present in almost all of the songs, but features most prominently in *YOM EZKERA CHET'I* (66), *AYIN VELEV* (70) and *ANI HAYOM MEOD CHOSHEK* (44).

Melody Migration

In Yemenite-Jewish tradition there is no exclusive combination of a specific melody with a specific poem: one melody may serve several poems, as long as it is compatible, and one poem may be sung to several tunes, all for the sake of variety. Melodies are commonly switched between stanzas, especially in the longer poems, as Idelsohn recounts (1925, p. 40):

> "The first singer is at liberty "to reverse", i.e., after the chief melody of the song has been repeated sufficiently, through several stanzas, the first singer introduces some other melody for the sake of variety. This process is known as "reversing". Skilful singers make several reverses and adopt a different melody for each stanza. Among Yemenites singers the art of reversing is considered the acme of perfection in music".

This fact is clearly manifest in the following notations: sometimes entire poems are sung to other, more popular tunes, and in these cases, it is enough to indicate this next to the song's title, and everybody knows the melody. In other instances, the borrowing is only partial: only some of the melodies are used for other poems, or, in an even more fascinating instance, the same melody appears with altered meter, rhythm and nature, yet maintaining its distinct identity, as in the following examples:

The melody of *LEFELACH HARIMON* (24) serves also the songs *AHUV MEHAR HAMOR* (27), *ASHIRA LE'AHUV* (29), and *SHADAY EL MA NORA* (16).

The melody of *SHALOM LEVO SHABAT* (3) may also serve the songs *YOSHEV BEKHISE HOD* (48) and *EL HAMEROMAM* (41).

The melody of *EMET ATA CHATANENU* (28) serves also the songs *SE'I YONA* (87), *SHEMA HA'EL ANENI* (56), and *YEDA'ATANI BETEREM TITSRENI* (47).

The melody of LEVAVI YACHSHEKA 'OFRA (85) is found in the songs *EHYE ASHER EHYE* (38), *YA MUCHGA* (64), *AKIF YA ZABI ELBAR* (79), and *MASAN BIRADA* (86).

The songs *RAMANI 'AYTAMUS* (53), *AYUMATI TE'ORER HAYESHENIM* (40) and *RETSE SICHI* (54), all of them multi-metered, share the same melody, and the same is true for triplet *ADON HAKOL* (14), *ILAH ALKUL* (22), and *ASABICH KHALKI* (21) all in the same meter.

Another triplet is *SAPERI TAMA* (69), *AB SHIM'ON KAL* (57) and *AYAHU ALHISN ALMUSAMA* (76), all in the same meter.

The melody of *IM NIN'ALU* (77) is also used for singing *ASALK YA AWHAGI ALGUZLAN* (60) and *ASALK YA CHUR ALGANANI* (78).

The melody of AHUV YEVARECH HECHATAN (26) is also used for singing *YA AYAHU ZABI ALSHRUD* (63).

The melody of *YA MUCHYI ALNUFUS* (65) is also used for singing *LAKH DODI* (68), as in the following couples: *AYUMA BEHAR HAMOR* (74) and *BURAIK ALYAMAN YASHAL* (82), *AYUMA HAMSHI* (75) and *FAZ'A KUMRI ALBAN* (88), *EL HAMEROMAM* (41) and *ABU YEHUDA YAKUL* (36), *AYELET CHEN* (25) and *TEN ASHISHA* (72), *YA MUCHGA* (64) and *AL'AZAB WALMUZAWAJ* (59).

Common melodic motifs are also found in songs *AHAVAT YOM SHABAT* (7), *SHAMA'TI MIPA'ATEI TEMAN* (20), and *YOM SHABAT TISMACH MEOD NAFSHI* (6).

A musical motif well-known in Israel as accompanying the Israeli song *Ki Tavo'u El Ha'Aretz* (As You Enter the Land) is present in the songs *MEHADAR CHATAN VEKHALA* (35), *YA MUCHYI ALNUFUS* (65), *SAPERI TAMA* (69) and *AYAHU ALHISN ALMUSAMA* (76).

A detailed examination of the melodies' compatibility with the poems indicates that the poetic meters of poems employing the same tune are identical or very close, enabling the singers to 'deploy' the lyrics over the music in a similar manner.

Manners of Performance

Usually, the lead singer begins the song, joined by the group later. The solo opening has a very practical purpose as well: the lead singer determines the song to be sung, and the others may join in only when they have recognized the song. The lead singer also determines the opening note pitch. Group members have a popular maxim: "The song is according to the singer", i.e., every singer has his own individual style. He is the one who determines the melody and the manner of singing, the switching of melodies, the tempo, and all the other components of the singing.

As for the melody variation, if the singer repeats the same melody too many times, the others tell him: 'Switch', and he then switches to another melody. In an interview

on September 14, 1992, Menachem Arussi commented on the singing sequence and organization, of whose importance Yemenite Jews are highly aware:

> "The Mari is the one to determine the pitch. Everybody knows one must sing in tune with the Mari. Therefore he repeats the first stanza twice by himself, so that everybody may listen and be able to respond in tune. And if there is one who does not know, he may sit quietly and shut up".

Menachem Arussi mentions several singing styles prevalent in the central-Yemenite regions of Kaukaban, Shakhadia and Makwait, and remarks that in Manakha they used to sing mainly as they did in San'a, while adapting styles from other regions as well. Arussi remembers the singing style of his teachers-predecessors, whose singing tradition he continues: Shalom Ozeiri, Yichya Rada'i and Shimon Attar, all disciples of Shalom Giat. On his style Arussi comments: "I mix other people's styles. Anyone who knows them, will immediately recognize their style."

The **responsorium** singing is thus the most common and distinct manner of performance, especially of the Nishwad, but also of other formats: a solo singer opens, and from the second verse on, one other singer or the whole group responds. The response may take on several forms:

Repeated response: The solo singer sings a verse, and the group responds by repeating the same verse.

Completing response: The solo singer sings the beginning of the verse (usually the first hemistich, the 'door'), and the group responds by completing it (usually with the second hemistich, the 'bolt').

Repeating-Completing Response: A combination of the above two: the responders repeat both the lyrics and the melody of the closing of the part sung by the soloist, and then complete the verse to its end.

Sabbath Songs. In musical terms, we can find only two songs with a specific rhythm: *IM ESHMERA SHABAT* (8), which is a girdle song, and *LANER VELIVSAMIM* (13), which is a Nashid. All the others are rhythmically freer, yet they may be divided into two sub-categories: completely improvised, and relatively free. The first one includes *AHAVAT YOM SHABAT* (7-girdle song), *IM TACHPETSA BEN ISH* (4-nashid), *YOM SHABAT TISMACH MEOD NAFSHI* (6-girdle song), *LIKRAT SHABAT* (2-girdle song), *SHABAT MENUCHA HI* (12-girdle song), *SHALOM LEVO SHABAT* (3-girdle song). The second includes *SHEVACH EL CHAY* (1-nashid), *ADON HAKOL* (14-nashid) and *AHAVAT DOD CHEFTSI* (10-girdle song).

Holiday Songs have no specific melodies, and they borrow tunes from other poems. Thus, *SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM* (17) borrows the melody of *LEVAVI YACHSHEKA OFRA* (85), while *SHADAY EL MA NORA* (16) borrows the melody of *LEFELACH HARIMON* (24), and *SHAMA'TI MIPA'ATEI TEMAN* (20) that of *AHAVAT YOM SHABAT* (7).

Wedding Songs. In musical terms, wedding songs are divided, much more distinctly than other song groups, into rhythmic and freeform songs. Most of the declamatory songs are in the Nashid format: *AT BEIN 'ATSEI 'EDEN* (23), *CHATAN TENA HODAKH* (33), *CHATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO* (34). One girdle song, *SHLOMOT YAGI'U* (32), is also included. All other wedding songs are rhythmic, with a relatively short, easily memorized melody. All the Zaffat and Chaduyot are included in this category, being functional songs with a simple poetic structure and relatively short verses, which may be sung at varying lengths – few or many, as necessary. These songs are sung with

several melodies, but one melody is prominent in being used by several poems, not necessarily in the same meter. We choose to define it as the melody for *LEFELACH HARIMON* (24), since it is always used for singing that song. In addition, the same melody is used for singing *AHUV MEHAR HAMOR* (27), *ASHIRA LEAHUV* (29), and also for the Succoth song *SHADAY EL MA NORA* (16), and another song for Simkhat Torah (usually not included in the Diwan) by Abraham Ibn Ezra (*Atzula Lefanim Bekhisse Aravot*).

The **Nashid** is usually sung as a response song. The Nashid is not accompanied by drumming and is not used for dancing, although it may be used as an introduction to dance, in the invitation game (see the chapter on Dance). It is mostly sung in a free, declamatory tempo, improvisational by nature. Since it is relatively short, it is usually sung to a single tune. In longer Nishwad it is customary to vary the singing with two-three different melodies, so that subsequent melodies are more rhythmic and less improvisational, as in *ADON HAKOL* (14). The only Nashid that is totally rhythmic among Sabbath songs is *LANER VELIVSAMIM* (13).

At the core of the song and dance event are the **Shirot**. Within the continuum of the event, the Shirot are the longest. The rhythm accompanying them is generated by the tin can (nowadays by a drum as well), and they are used for dancing. In musical terms, they are the most rhythmical and structured, with more defined melodies, although the role of improvisation is not entirely diminished. At the end of the Shirot, the word *Ve'haleluya* is written, indicating that after the Shira, the Hallel is sung, which always begins with this word. Thus the Nashid-Shira-Hallel continuum is completed: The Nashid serving as a kind of introduction, the Shira as the centerpiece, and the Hallel as a final greeting. With the Shirot it is customary to beat the drum and dance. The Taushich is usually sung in a different way than other verses, with an altered tempo, meter or rhythm, which in turn alters the nature of the dance somewhat.

Hallelot singing resembles the chanting of prayers, a fact which may connote their ancient origin. A solo singer begins the Hallel, usually the one who has just completed the Shira, but sometimes another member of the group, who is accepted by everyone as the one who begins the Hallel. By the opening verse, all others can tell which Hallel is being sung, and join in, usually at the beginning of the second verse. While the Shirot, the longer ones in particular, necessitate consulting with the book, being hard to memorize, the Hallelot are relatively short and familiar to most of the group members. Their singing is therefore more spontaneous and social: in most instances, the entire audience joins in, including those who had just finished dancing, even as they panting from the effort, and the viewers, who up until now have been only listening and observing.

In musical terms, the Hallelot are the most recitative of Diwan songs, and the closest to prayer chanting. As Idelsohn commented (1923, Hebrew edition, p.16): "Prayers are said by the Yemenites, i.e., the melody is not the main thing, but rather the accentuated speaking [...]". In other words, the Hallelot have defined patterns: they are not melodies, but repeated motifs, organized in a specific, structured sequence. There are three such motifs:

1. One reciting note (or two), on which the Hallel lyrics are "recited" in a syllabled manner (i.e., one note per one syllable).
2. A descending motif: a melisma of several descending notes on an accented syllable, generally the last syllable of the word.
3. An ascending motif: several ascending notes, also on an accented syllable, as in the descending motif.

Hallelot singing is usually in unison, as is the entire Diwan singing, but there is often a polyphony of parallels, when some of the singers find themselves singing in an awkward vocal range (too low), and decide to sing at the pitch in which their voice sounds best. Any singer may ascend to that note, spontaneously in most cases, raising his voice to a perfect 4th above the others' pitch. Soon other members, who find the new pitch more comfortable, may follow suit.

Two concurrent processes which constantly occur in the musical structure of the Hallelot, serve to change the pitch. On the one hand, the enthusiastic singing is naturally raising the pitch. The rise is gradual and unnoticed, but ongoing, so that after one or two verses, what has been a C, for instance, is now a C sharp. On the other hand, each Hallel verse begins one large second lower than its predecessor. Thus, in a Hallel beginning on D, the next verse is sung in C, and the next in B flat, and so on. Even if we take into account the constant ascending within the verses, the descending is still considerable, so that a tenor could soon find himself singing at baritone range. At this point the 'leap' one 4th up occurs, as if to return to the original pitch. Those comfortable with the baritone pitch may go on singing without change, and those who want to sing at tenor range ascend and go on singing at the higher pitch. This creates a singing at intervals, commonly heard at any Yemenite Jewish synagogue. When this phenomenon was first "discovered" by Europeans, it generated much awe, being the key to the origins of the Organum in Europe, where singing at intervals, written in notes from the 9th century, has actually marked the beginning of the European polyphonic music. It should be noted that this singing style began in Europe in church hymns (Alleluia Sequences), which are in many ways similar to the Hallelot of Yemenite Jews; both are new hymns, based on ancient texts of religious praise. This subject deserves a more thorough and elaborate research (Bahat, 1986).

The way of singing the Hallel is probably very ancient and well-rooted in the Yemenite Jewish culture, as suggested by the manner of singing of many of the songs, especially Sabbath and wedding songs. It always happens in the group response, often toward the end of the song or when singing the refrain, as in *LIKRAT SHABAT* (2), *SHALOM LEVO SHABAT* (3), *IM TACHPETSA BEN ISH* (4), *BECHIREY EL REU* (9), and *CHATAN TENA HODAKH* (33).

Lyrics and Meters

The poetic meters of the Spanish Golden Age of Hebrew poetry are prevalent in Diwan songs, and the singing tradition of Yemenite Jews is a direct extension of Jewish-Spanish poetry. As mentioned above, the first Diwans were comprised solely of medieval Hebrew poetry of Spain, and only later grew to include works by Yemenite poets. It is therefore important to examine whether these meters are manifest in the manner of singing and punctuation of the Diwan. Since the metric principle in Spanish poetry is quantitative, i.e., short vowels and long vowels, we would expect to find that short vowels are sung with relatively short notes, and long vowels with long notes. And indeed, the singers 'tailor' their singing to this principle in a most natural and spontaneous way. However, this is not a strict rule, and on rare occasions we find a short vowel (Hataf) with a long note, or even a melisma.

In terms of the musical meters, the rhythmic songs sometimes have a uniform meter for the entire poem or for each of its melodies, but the meters frequently alternate. The most common meters are the duplet and the triplet meters, which may alternate with each other in the same melody (as in *ADON HAKOL* (14), *SHADAY EL MA NORA* (16) and many others). Another popular meter is the 7/8, which was probably borrowed

from female singing, being the Da'asa meter characteristic of Yemenite women dances (Avraham, Bahat-Ratzon, 1993). When the song is structured in a multi-meter, where each column begins with a metric foot, there is a perfect overlapping between a 7/8 bar and each column, as in *AMALLEL SHIR* (43), *AYUMATI TE'ORER HAYESHENIM* (40), *RETSE SICHI* (54), because the opening short vowel gets an off-beat (anacrusis) of 1/8, while the rest of the vowels only a 1/4. With regard to pronunciation, it should be noted that Yemenite Jews pronounce the short vowels correctly, so that they can still attain a musical value, albeit a shorter one. It is also noteworthy that the Diwan contains many deviations from grammatical rules concerning short vowels (*Sheva* and even *Hataf*): due to limitations of poetic meter, a formalistic principle of great importance to the poets, short vowels often become pseudo-long vowels. In singing, however, the singers will always pronounce the vowels correctly, disregarding formalistic principles. Moreover, even short vowels may be pronounced as long ones, for the sake of maximum clarity.

The **phrasing** of the singing is mostly determined by the hemistichs: each hemistich is considered a complete unit. In songs with a repeated response, the complete hemistich is usually the only one repeated. In a completing response, the group may respond with a bolt to the solo door, but often the hemistich itself is divided: the beginning is sung by the solo singer, and its completion is the response. In this form, words may be freely repeated so as to fit the melody, based on the great dexterity of the singers, as in *SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM* (17). Fitting the lyrics to the melody may sometimes require repeating not whole words, but syllables, so that the words are cut in the middle, as in *LANER VELIVSAMIM* (13) and *ADON HAKOL* (14).

The phrasing of the singing often suggests the preference of poetic meter over the natural division of words. Logic would dictate breathing or punctuating between words and not in their middle. In most cases the meter divisions and the words are compatible, but that is not always the case. Punctuation is usually between words, but often it is in the middle of a word, for reasons of metric division, though the singers may not even be aware of it, as in *AHAVAT HADASA* (37), which in certain melodies is broken at the end of the first column, breaking the word *Hadasa* in the middle.

Musical Characteristics

Melisma. In terms of word:note ratio, most of the singing is syllabic-neumatic, i.e., each syllable is sung on a single note or two-three notes. There are, however, instances of melisma, some of them quite long, in typical locations, such as the endings of verses, on the last syllable or the one preceding it, nicely preparing for the closure, as in *SHEVACH EL CHAY* (1) and *RE'ACH HADAS* (31). Another type of melisma is the preliminary or introductory melisma, found in the transition to a new stanza. The lead singer sings a long melisma on the beginning of the next stanza (the first syllable or word), as if to prepare us for it, as in *YOM EZKERA CHET'I* (66), *AYIN VELEV* (70), *IM NIN'ALU* (77), *EHYE ASHER EHYE* (38), *SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM* (17) and many others.

Closing Formulae. Typical closing formulae, used for many songs with minor variations, are essential to the group singing style. They prepare the transition to the blessing to follow, or to the next song. Sometimes this is an entire verse, as in *BEYOM SHABAT ASHABE'ACH* (5), *YOM SHABAT TISMACH MEOD NAFSHI* (6), *AHAVAT YOM SHABAT* (7), *AHAVAT DOD CHEFTSI* (10) and *SHLOMOT YAGI'U* (32). In other

instances it is a shorter version, as in *SHEVACH EL CHAY* (1) and *SHABAT MENUCHA HI* (12). Another closing formula is found in *EL HAMEROMAM* (41) at the end of the three stanzas, albeit in varying pitch.

Reciting notes and driving notes. These terms are used to explain a common occurrence in the structure of many of the declamatory songs with a flowing rhythm. Reciting notes are central notes, on which a major portion of the verse's syllables, or even most of them, are sung. At times, this is a single note, but usually these are two adjacent notes. This is most prominent in the Hallelot, but also found in certain Sabbath and wedding songs. It is obviously related to the songs' sanctity and antiquity.

Driving notes are those appearing at the verse's beginning, seeming to "drive" it toward the reciting notes, which are mostly at a 4th interval up from them, as in *AT BEIN 'ATSEI 'EDEN* (23), *SHEVACH EL CHAY* (1), *ANI ESHAL SHEVACH HA'EL* (11), where the reciting notes are C-D and the driving notes are G-A. In *RE'ACH HADAS* (31) and *CHATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO* (34), the reciting notes are G-A, and the driving notes are D-E.

Tonal Flexibility. Tonality, in its European sense, has no function in the group's singing, which is independent of any musical theory, and totally spontaneous and acquired by word-of-mouth communication. The identity of a melody is its **melodic course**. Thus it is possible for a melody to begin at any point, since the value of the note pitch is not absolute, but rather relative. This also explains how the same melody, i.e., the same melodic course, may include major and minor 2nds in different locations on different occasions, which to a European-educated ear would sound as if the song is sung each time in a different mode, for example, once in major and once in minor. Examples abound, and in our recordings they are practically countless. This compilation includes notes for only a few of these, and the reader is referred to them as mere examples:

In *EL HAMEROMAM* (41), the first verse ends on E. The second verse begins and ends on the same note, but in tonal terms, it is very far from the first. The third verse returns to the tonality of the first.

In *SHABAT MENUCHA HI* (12), the same occurs in the third verse. In *MI NISHEKANI MINESHIKOT AHAVA* (51) it happens in the second verse. In *SHEVACH EL CHAY* (1), there is sometimes an E flat and at other times an E natural, but as far as the singers are concerned, this has no significance, since the melodic course is the same. In *EHYE ASHER EHYE* (38), the first verse is supposedly in E minor, and the third in G major, but that makes not difference to the singers, because the melody is the same. In *HAT ALKLAM* (83), the first two verses seem different, but to the singers they are the same, because the melodic course is identical. In *YA TAIR ALBAN* (84) this is the case throughout the entire song.

Notation of the Songs

The musical notation presented here in a very limited form, is but a condensed essence of the transcriptions made from all the recordings made as part of this research work. All songs presented here have been recorded several times on different occasions, at considerable time intervals, ranging even to several years. Each of the songs was recorded and notated at least twice, and sometimes up to ten times, in order to extract the essence from all given versions. Obviously, singing is never an exact repetition. It is by nature improvisational, even in the more structured Shirot, so that each notation

is different from the others in many details. However, when a single song is documented five or six times – and this applies to most of the songs in this compilation – a clear distinction may be made between the permanent motifs, which are the song's essentials, and those which only appear occasionally, as a nonessential embellishment. In this edition, the notations represent the skeleton, the essence of the song's vital part, without which the song is not itself. In most instances, the notations represent only some of the song's stanzas, implying that the rest of the song is sung to the same melodies, as the singers see fit.

The **phrasing** of the songs in this edition is indicated by the division of the verses, or lines: Just as each poem is printed according to the order of its lines, and its structure can be discerned from its typographical attributes, so the notation is written with each verse in a separate line. In most cases this is clearly represented in the notation page: when the verse was too long to fit in one line, a second line was added; the next verse, however, would always begin on a new line. Shorter verses occupied less than one line, so that their notation lines are shorter. In any case, a new verse would never begin in the middle of the line.

Rhythm. In notating the rhythm we used two methods: rhythmic songs were notated in ordinary notes, along with their rhythms and meters. The improvisational songs were sometimes notated with rhythmic values, but this notation should only be construed as a hint of the actual rhythm, which is quite free and impossible to notate under the present notation system. In instances where the songs were even more freeform, the notations were made without any precise time signatures, but only approximated values, i.e., black notes representing relatively shorter values, small notes for the faster trills, and white notes for the longer values. This notation is based on the conventional notation of Gregorian chants, which seemed most appropriate under the circumstances. Examples include *CHATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO* (34), and *AT BEIN 'ATSEI 'EDEN* (23). At times, there are mixed notations in the same song, as dictated by its singing style, as in *BECHAG HASUKOT* (15), *SHAMA'TI MIPA'ATEI TEMAN* (20), and *MI NISHEKANI MINESHIKOT AHAVA* (51).

The legato curved lines in the notation mark the notes sung on each syllable and have no other meaning.

Many of the Shirot are accompanied by a characteristic, rhythmic pattern of drumming, constant throughout the song despite minor improvised variations. This pattern is notated at the top of the song, and should be maintained throughout the song. Often, when the singing stops, the drumming is amplified and the drummer is temporarily the soloist. These breaks provide some rest for the singer's voice, while stressing the rhythm for the dancers.

The **tempo** of the songs is quite free, so that any metronome mark may only serve as a hint of the average tempo. Actually, the singing is structured as a constant rubato. It is the lyrics which determine the song's tempo, as the melody should serve the lyrics. In the recitative songs (Hallelot, Nishwad, some of the Sabbath songs and others), the metronome mark suggests the average tempo of the syllables, when the singing is syllabic (i.e., one syllable per note). In rhythmic songs, the metronome mark suggests the average time unit. The tempo is usually accelerated during singing, as the atmosphere warms up and enthusiasm heightens, but not always. For instance, when response singing is performed, the tempo of the phrase sung by the soloist is almost never the same as that of the phrase sung by the responding group: at times the solo

singing is slow, whereas the response is faster (as if saying, "We've heard that phrase already, let's move on quickly"), and at other times the group responds in a slower tempo, for the obvious reason that group singing is heavier and more awkward than solo singing. In any case, the 'rainbow principle' usually governs the singing: it begins in a slow tempo, accelerates as the singing proceeds, and slows down again toward the end. This principle applies to every song in itself, as well as to the general structure of the continuum: opening with the slow Nashid, proceeding with the fast rhythmic Shira, and closing with the slow Hallel, as the event comes to its end in a more relaxed, serene atmosphere.

The song's **duration** is not necessarily dependent on the length of the lyrics or the singing tempo. A long Shira may take a shorter time than a Nashid four-liner, lasting several moments. The shortest Diwan poems are the Hallelot, whose singing only takes about a minute or so. A Nashid preceding a Shira could range from two to four minutes, but some Nishwad, for instance wedding festivity songs, may even last up to fifteen minutes, because their tempo is very slow and they contain many repetitions. Naturally, the Shirot are the longest ones in poetic terms, but their duration in dance and song depends on several factors, such as how many stanzas are to be sung, whether the verses are sung in full or only in part, are there many repetitions, etc., and of course, the tempo itself – whether it is fast or slow, a fact that has to do with the development of the dance as well.

The **pitch** of the song in the notations represents the average pitch customary for singing. It goes without saying, that the singers are completely unaware of the pitch of the notation. They begin singing, with the opening singer determining the pitch by spontaneously singing at the pitch that is most compatible with his vocal range. Indeed, this pitch may not suit all the other singers, hence the "splitting up" and singing at intervals, which is discussed in the section on Hallelot. Yemenite Jews usually have a high voice, extending more or less to the tenor range. Their singing range usually extends between middle C and first G, the common tenor range. Many of them are uncomfortable singing at the lower half of the small octave, i.e., the "bottom" of this range, and would rather use the higher part of the range. Thus, in certain songs, the Hallelot in particular, these singers spontaneously ascend to the 4th over the others, and sing at intervals. If the range goes even lower, they will soon be joined by other members, until the original line is discarded completely.

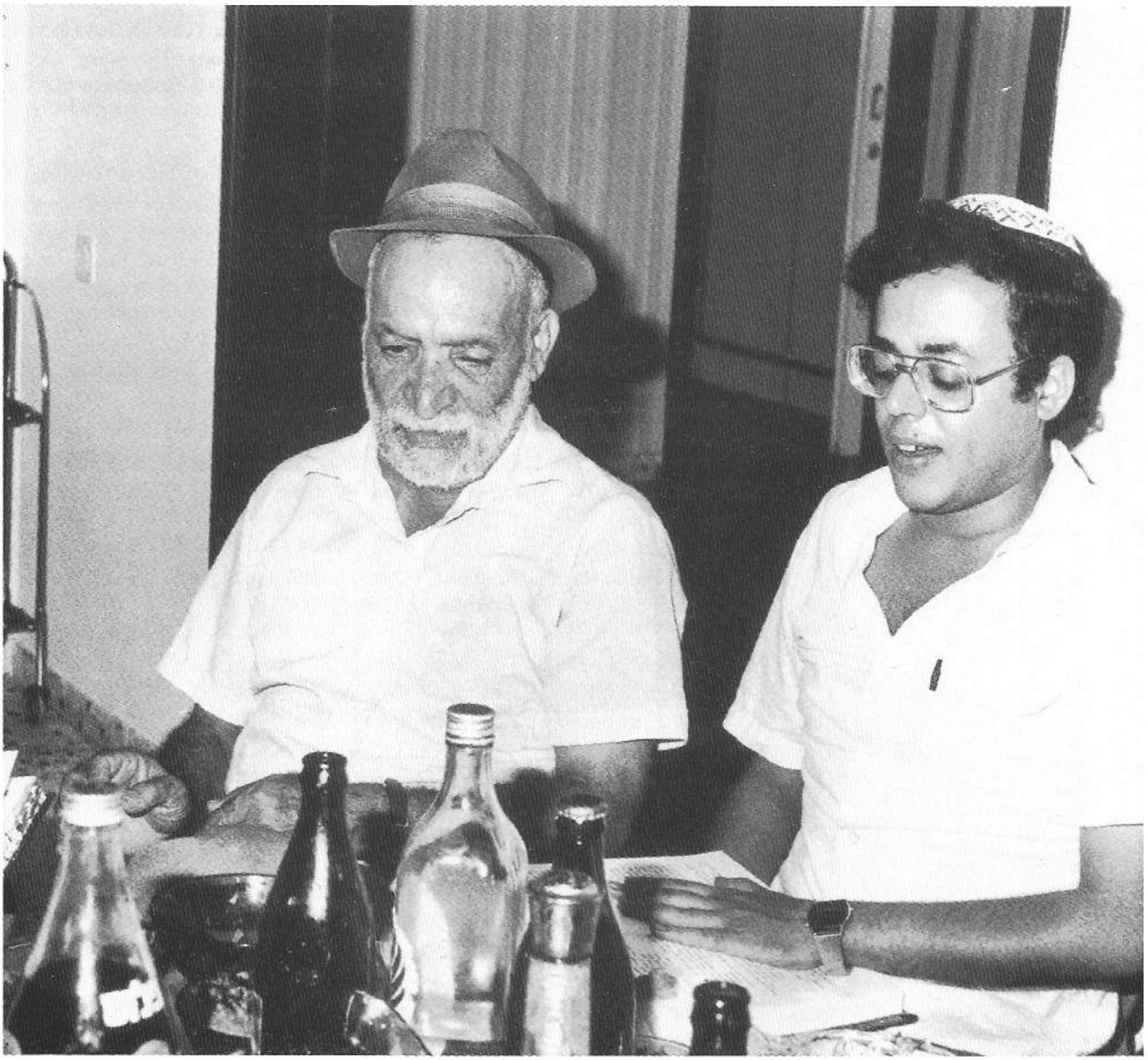
Accidentals. According to the conventions of ethnomusicological notation, the accidentals printed at the beginning of the stave do not suggest a specific key, only the relative pitch in which the notes should be sung. They are therefore not written in any systematic order, and apply only to the notes actually sung. In some instances, these marks are printed only next to the notes within the stave, while in others they may appear at the beginning of the stave, based on convenience only and free of any conventions. Accidentals at the beginning of the stave relate to that stave only, and should not be applied to the following staves. As there are frequent changes in these accidentals, it is most important to pay attention to it.

Each song is presented along with all available information in the following format:
- Lyrics in full or in part
- Interpretation and translation of Arabic and Aramaic phrases
- Classification of type, function and languages

- Author, if known
- Acrostic sign (when one exists)
- Number of stanzas and specification of the number of stanzas presented here, if the song is abridged
- Poetic meter specified in marking and name
- Stanza structure (in Shirot with Taushich)
- Source (Amallel Shir, page number) or name of editor
- General content
- Function: singing customs and times
- Previous sources in which the song was documented, if any
- Notes on the structure and manner of singing, use in Israeli works, melodies and notations
- Notation along with lyrics of the selected stanzas (marked in capital letters)

אהרן כהן ובנו שרים מן הדיואן
(צלם: עפר בהט)

Aharon Cohen and his son singing from the Diwan (Photo: Ofer Bahat)



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הזמנה למחול – נשיד
(צלם: יעקב אבירם)

Invitation to the dance – Nashid
(Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

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GLOSSARY

Bolt – The last hemistich of the verse, usually the second, completing the door.

Bolting Rhyme – A single rhyme for all verses of a poem. Commonly found in Qasida and Nashid formats.

Chaduya (in plural **Chaduyot**) – A joyous song, usually a wedding song; short, simple and easy to memorize, often with repeated phrases in which one word keeps changing in alphabetical order.

Column – In medieval Arab and Hebrew poetry, a combination of metric feet and vowels (not less than two and not more than four), constituting a metric unit within a poetic meter. Each meter is comprised of a constant number of columns in a permanent order.

Diwan – The paraliturgical book of Yemenite Jews. In Spain this term referred to a collection of poems by a single poet ,and later on to a collection of poems by many poets.

Door – The first hemistich of the verse, completed by the bolt.

Driving note – A relatively low note serving as a "springboard" for higher notes, which are the core of the verse.

Girdle Song (in Arabic *Muwashshah*) – A strophic poem whose opening rhyme (in the first stanza or guide) rhymes with the end of each stanza, although each of the stanzas has an internal rhyming of its own.

Guide – One or two verses in the beginning of a girdle song, which introduce the rhyme ending each of its stanzas: the first girdle appearing before the first stanza.

Hallel – A praise (in plural **Hallelot**), a blessing sung at the end of the continuum Nashid-Shira-Hallel. The text of the Hallel is rhymed prose, not metered, often ending with a biblical verse.

Halaka – The haircutting ceremony of preparing the bridegroom for the wedding.

Hemistich – A unit of poetic meter, which is part of a verse, consisting of several columns. Usually there are two hemistichs in a verse: door and bolt, and sometimes three or four.

Melisma – A sequence of notes (three-four or more), sung to one syllable.

Muwashshah – See Girdle Song.

Nashid – (in plural **Nishwad**), a song format popular in Yemenite Jewish Diwan, with a bolting rhyme. A direct extension of the medieval Qasida, whose number of verses is usually limited (4 to 11 in most cases).

Neumatic – A division of notes over syllables, where two-three notes are sung on each syllable.

Qasida – A prevalent format in medieval Arab and Hebrew poetry: a long epic poem with a single bolting rhyme.

Reciting note – A central note (or two tied ones) in a phrase, repeated many times and used for singing most of the text (also known as *tenor, tuba, repercussio*).

Rubato – A manner of performance, in which the performer is free to alter the tempo of the song.

Shir – Song in Hebrew = Nashid.

Shira (in plural **Shirot**) – A Diwan form which includes girdle songs and more developed poems, with Taushich in the middle.

Stanza – a poetic unit consisting of several verses (also known as a **strophe**). In this edition, the girdle songs mostly consist of four-line stanzas and the Shirot have a larger number of lines in each stanza.

Syllabic – A manner of singing, in which one note is sung on one syllable, and every syllable has one note.

Taushich – A section of three short lines, of one hemistich each, in the middle of the Shira, separating the long lines which begin and end the stanza.

Tetrachord – A succession of four notes in the span of a 4th, ascending or descending.

Tikhlal – The prayer book (liturgy) of Yemenite Jews, similar to the *Machazor* in other congregations.

Verse – A line in a poem, consisting of several hemistichs, usually two – door and bolt.

Zaffa (in plural **Zaffat**) – A festive wedding song, used for accompanying the bridegroom or the bride to the canopy (or when bringing the Torah scroll into the Holy Ark at the synagogue).

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Learning the Diwan songs (Photo: Ofer Bahat)

לימוד שירי הדיואן (צלם: עפר בהט)

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Recording session in Beth Hatefutsoth (Photo: Yaacov Aviram)

הקלטה בבית התפוצות (צלם: יעקב אבירם)