



THE MUSIC OF TISHA B'AV AND THE MELODIES OF THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE NUSACH

It is not customary to associate Tisha B'Av with music, but even the "dry" recital of Kinot in an Ashkenaz synagogue is punctuated by the moving musical interplay in the kinah contrasting "*be-tzayti miMitzrayim*" (as I left Egypt) with "*be-tzayti miYrushalayim*" (as I left Jerusalem).

The Kinot conclude with the evocative melody of "*Eli Tziyon*," so captivating that it is often used to chant various prayers on Shabbat Chazon, the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, especially in Ashkenaz synagogues.

Additionally, the melancholy melody of Eicha, the Book of Lamentations, chanted on Tisha B'Av night, conveys the sadness of that Book. Some even have the custom, as did my father, z'l, to recite the third chapter of Eicha with a completely different melody. [See: www.torahmusings.com/2014/12/changing-tune-third-chapter-eicha/]

The Jewish community is blessed with many different "*aydot*" (groups/congregations) that span the globe and centuries of religious expression. My father thought it was important to

expose his family and congregation to these different "*nuschaot*" (liturgical variations) via music and prayer experiences. Though his was a typical Ashkenaz congregation, on Tisha B'Av, when driving is permissible, my father often took congregants to pray in Philadelphia's historic colonial Congregation Mikveh Israel with its Spanish-Portuguese traditions. The chanting of every kinah with a specific, dirgeful tune, along with chapters of Eicha and Iyov recited with the Sephardic cantillation, made Tisha B'Av there a very moving and meaningful unique experience.

For those in New York City, the same uplifting service can be experienced in America's first congregation, Congregation Shearith Israel, The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

In fact, Cong. Shearith Israel has many of these melodies online for all to partake of: <https://www.shearithisrael.org/content/tisha-bab-liturgy>. [As we get closer to Tisha B'Av, a link for a live stream of Tisha B'Av services at Cong. Shearith Israel should be available at www.shearithisrael.org, and on the web page of the American Sephardi Federation: americansephardi.org.

I am privileged to dedicate this issue of *Torah To Go* in memory of my dear parents, z'l: Rabbi Meyer Kramer, whose yahrzeit is on 7 Tammuz, and Mrs. Rose Schnabel Kramer, whose yahrzeit is on Tzom Gedalyah, 3 Tishrei.

My father was committed to having a full-time chazan in his shul, (for many years, Chazan Rav Irwin Witty, z'l), because he believed and knew that the beauty and inspiration of a service was enhanced by proper nusach and uplifting and appropriate nigunim.

Growing up in our home in the second half of the 20th Century, the most appreciated form of education and entertainment and edifying spirituality was listening to the many wonderful cantorial, chassidic and general Jewish music on 33 1/3 RPM LP records. While music today is more ubiquitously shared, one thing that hasn't changed is what Chazal teach us—that the Heavenly Gates of Music are never closed.

May we all yet be privileged to listen this Tisha B'Av to what will be the most moving musical celebrations—the singing and instrumental playing by the Levi'im in the rebuilt Bet Hamikdash. May we hear the ultimate sounds of music that will emanate from the Shofar of Mashiach, speedily in our day. Amen.