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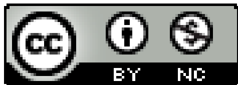

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# Introduction

One afternoon in September 1947, forty-eight young demonstrators invaded the British Admiralty's administrative offices, housed on the thirteenth floor of a Manhattan office building. The American Jewish students and their two leaders—both Jewish veterans of World War II—were protesting Britain's recent refusal to allow entry to the *Exodus* ship full of European Jewish Holocaust survivors seeking safe harbor in British Mandatory Palestine and denounced the British Admiralty as "pirates" for returning "to Germany the passengers of the Exodus." As the impassioned, mostly high school-aged protestors exited the building's stairwells and piled into the office space, something quite distinctive occurred. Their voices joined in singing the "Star-Spangled Banner," which they followed with Zionist Hebrew songs. Whereas the "Star-Spangled Banner" served as a performative affirmation of their American patriotism, the Hebrew songs enmeshed it with support for Zionist national aspirations to bring more Jews to Palestine and a sense of comradery with "those [Jewish] fighters for Israel"[1] clashing with the British colonial administration and Arab populations amidst political chaos in Palestine.

In 1947, American Jewish demonstrations against the British government and its immigration policies in Palestine were common. Likewise, American Jews expressing American patriotism astride pro-Zionist sentiments in the late 1940s is unremarkable and a well-studied aspect of American Jewish history. What is quite significant about this protest and indeed representative of an underexplored yet ubiquitous phenomenon in American Jewish and Zionist history is the distinct, central role those Zionist songs played in it. Why is it that the American national anthem and Zionist songs were the means through which these young Jews chose to express their sense of

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American patriotism alongside their support for the Zionist national movement in Palestine? Further, how might Zionist songs have played a broader role in shaping American Jewish connections to and expressions of Zionism and Hebrew national culture in the years prior to this 1947 protest?

Through analyzing a selection of American Zionist song publications, curricular materials, performances, public programs containing Hebrew songs, journalistic coverage of Hebrew music culture, as well as other sources from the first half of the twentieth century,[2] the following book demonstrates that Hebrew music culture was central to the processes that comprised what might be called the "Zionization" of American Jewry prior to Israel's declaration of Independence in May 1948. Few American Jews during the period had been to Palestine and seldom did they interact with Zionists there prior to Israeli statehood. Considering this physical distance and the limitations of communications technologies, fostering an enduring sense of inclusion in the emergent Zionist national movement and its claims to land in Palestine amongst American Jewry required mechanisms for active participation in Zionist activities and Hebrew national culture from afar. Moreover, many Zionist activists and Jewish communal professionals integrated such Zionist engagements into already established Jewish settings, institutions, and contexts. Indeed, Hebrew national culture—including Zionist Hebrew songs—emerged as significant tools used to this end. Interdenominational Jewish educators, clergy, and Zionist activists successfully evolved Zionism's presence in American Jewish life pre-1948, making it mainstream, and Hebrew songs were a common thread amongst their efforts.

American Hebrew national culture and music were shaped by diverse American Jewish tastes, needs, outlooks, and priorities as much as they were by cultural and national developments in Palestine, all of which were in active flux throughout the pre-1948 period. Likewise in flux were America's diverse Jewish communities' priorities in establishing minority religious communities across the US. American Jews were a socioeconomically, culturally, and religiously diverse population in the first half of the twentieth century. Further, different American Jewish sects and communities related to Zionism in diverse ways and on different timelines throughout the pre-1948 period. Yet, shared among most was the eventual integration of Zionist activism and Hebrew songs into their communal and religious activities by 1948. In the decades leading to 1948, growing numbers of American Jews sought and found outlets to learn about, develop a sense of inclusion in, and even "perform" aspects of Zionism and Hebrew national culture from afar as part of American-Jewish identity. As what follows demonstrates, Hebrew song

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helped bridge linguistic, cultural, and geographic gaps between the US and Palestine as many American Jews became Zionists, all while striving to climb the American socioeconomic ladder and build diverse, enduring Jewish religious and communal institutions prior to 1948.

This American Hebrew musical phenomenon did not come to fruition without the concerted efforts of many during the first half of the twentieth century to popularize Hebrew national culture, music, and Zionist engagement in the US, across denominational lines. One example of these efforts occurred in March 1919. Henrietta Szold, American Zionist activist and founder of the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America (established in 1912), wrote a letter to prominent musicologist, educator, and composer Avraham Zvi Idelsohn. At the time, Szold, amongst her numerous endeavors, served as Secretary of Education for the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA, established in 1897), an interdenominational Zionist association. Idelsohn was living and working in Palestine, seeking to uncover, recreate, and proliferate what he deemed to be an authentic Jewish national music. "The Department of Education of the Zionist Organization of America . . . desires to foster a love of Jewish music among its members . . . namely to unite the American diaspora through song with the Palestinian centre," Szold wrote. She continued by requesting that Idelsohn keep her "informed of whatever may be produced in the way of Palestinian songs." And since few in the US had much experience teaching the types of Hebrew songs which she anticipated that he may send to her, Szold further requested that Idelsohn share his methods in teaching those songs in "schools and other institutions" in Palestine so she could more impactfully use them as pedagogical tools to achieve her stated goal of uniting American Jews with those in the *Yishuv*.[3]

Szold's early interest in utilizing Hebrew music as part of her Zionist activism went well beyond her correspondence with Idelsohn and work as the Secretary of Education for the ZOA. Szold was an outlier amongst leaders of American Jewish institutions and religious organizations—most of whom were men, educated and/or ordained at Jewish seminaries. Women were not ordained as Jewish clergy in America until the early 1970s,[4] and, more broadly, women in America had limited options to pursue professional careers or participate in social activism in the pre-1948 period. In her book, *Hadassah and the Zionist Project*, political scientist Erica B. Simmons argues that "Hadassah's successful battle for autonomy [from the ZOA], especially fiscal autonomy," achieved in 1933, "bolstered the organizations credibility amongst American Jewish women." Such developments, combined with "Hadassah's skillful propaganda, made Hadassah the largest American Zionist Orga-

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nization during the interwar period." Noting the importance of Hadassah to American Jewish women in the pre-1948 period, Simmons argues that "many were profoundly affected by their involvement in Hadassah." Beyond providing social networks and access to activist outlets, Hadassah "became a training ground for learning new skills." Hadassah's work gave "women confidence in themselves as political activists and organizers and opened the way for them to find a public voice not only in the Jewish community but in the larger American community."[5] Simmons's assessment of Hadassah's role in creating unique activist and professional opportunities for women in the American Jewish community, as well as their impact on raising substantial contributions to Zionist fundraising goals in pre-1948 America are indeed reflected by my archival findings.

Hadassah's focus on healthcare and other "domestic" issues in Palestine helped Szold and her associates frame Zionist activist work in terms deemed socially acceptable for American Jewish women to participate in—even as a central component of their engagements with synagogues and other Jewish organizations in America. Within this context, Hadassah's hundreds of national chapters, as well as other Jewish women's Zionist groups that followed, flowered as outlets for American Jewish women to engage in a variety of activist and professional activities deemed unacceptable for women outside of such religious, communal work. The substantial financial aid and support for a variety of Zionist causes in Palestine that they garnered during the pre-1948 period[6] included musical institutions like the Palestine Conservatoire of Music. And, as shown in her correspondence with Idelsohn, Szold, amongst numerous others in the field of Jewish education, worked to help Jewish educators across America (many of whom were women and/or not professional teachers) attain Hebrew music as an accessible and easy to utilize curricular tool, appropriate for a variety of American Jewish educational settings.[7] By the 1930s, in part a result of Hadassah's successes, women's role in American Hebrew music culture and education became more pronounced than in prior decades. However, the following includes numerous examples of American women's roles in utilizing Hebrew music as part of American Zionist activism and Jewish education throughout the 1920–1948 period. It must be noted that in 1919, when Szold requested Idelsohn's help in securing Hebrew songs for the ZOA, the Zionist national project was still a polemical movement amongst many American Jews, but that circumstance was changing.

Events surrounding World War I catalyzed more mainstream American Jewish support for the Zionist national movement, yet the non-linear shift tended to ebb and flow until the 1930s. In 1915, Louis Brandeis—American

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Jewish Supreme Court Justice and highly influential figure in the American Jewish community—famously articulated that "to be good Americans we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists."[8] This high-profile proclamation helped allay the concerns of certain American Jews that supporting Zionism could elicit accusations of dual loyalty and obstruct their push toward full inclusion in "Americanness" and the American middle class, a prevalent anxiety at the time. Then, in 1917, the British issued the Balfour Declaration—a short letter from British Foreign Secretary to British Zionist activist and financier Walter Rothschild—offered a formal British endorsement of certain Zionist national goals amidst Britain's nearing victory against the Ottomans in 1917 Palestine, and provided significant international legitimacy to the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine.[9] This Zionist milestone was celebrated by many American Jews and initiated a boost in American Jewish Zionist support in the aftermath of WWI.[10] Still, despite the conspicuous domestic and international legitimacy bestowed upon the Zionist national project, many Jews and Jewish leaders in the US, particularly within the Reform Jewish movement, were yet to endorse the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine, let alone the adoption of an extra-American national identity.[11] However, by the 1920s, mainstream American Jewish embrace of and enthusiasm for Zionist engagement and Hebrew national culture (including songs) grew rapidly, and by the late 1930s, non- or anti-Zionist stances in American Judaism waned quickly amidst worsening circumstances for Jews in Europe and Palestine, barred by Congress in 1924 from seeking refuge in America.

Szold sought to use Zionist songs as one instrument to proliferate and popularize Zionist engagement and Hebrew national culture in America during this pivotal period of American Zionism's evolution and was not alone in these pursuits. Beyond just changing the minds of non- or anti-Zionist American Jews or building a broader base of support for the Zionist cause in the US, these inter-denominational clergy, Jewish educators, Jewish communal leaders, and others sought to incorporate varying forms of Zionist national support, ritual traditions, and cultural trends into American Jewish life.[12] In part a result of these early American Zionists' undertakings, musical and otherwise, the aspects of Zionism and Hebrew national culture that were woven into the fabric of mainstream American Judaism throughout the first half of the twentieth century endured. American Zionist institutions like Hadassah as well as many others are likewise still extant and operational on a large, international scale. By the 1940s, much like today, many American Jews supported the Zionist cause, and for some, it was a central component

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of their Jewish identity. Simultaneously, they remained firmly committed to their American locale and national identities, embracing growing inclusion in the claim to full Americanness and the American middle class.[13] And Israeli music—something that can be listened to, danced to, or sung, communally or alone—remains a key, contemporaneous piece of American Jews' ability to learn about, participate in, or even perform aspects of Zionism, particularly in Jewish educational, religious, and other communal settings.

Szold's letter is a unique revelation in understanding American Zionism's early Hebrew musical roots. Today, however, these types of outreach efforts to Israeli cultural figures and educators are ubiquitous. There are networks of competing organizations, as well as individual Jewish educators from around the globe focused solely on producing educational, religious, and programmatic materials designed to instill within American Jewry a sense of Zionist belonging, utilizing a variety of pedagogical tools. "Israel education" has in fact become a prevalent sub-field within Jewish education and its associated institutions, across denominations in the Americas and in other diaspora communities.[14] Following in the footsteps of Szold, today, many American Jewish educators, clergy, and communal professionals interested in engaging with Israel and Zionism in their communities utilize Israeli music to help develop and maintain a communal sense of association with Zionism and the state of Israel.

In their 2015 publication, *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education,* the iCenter—an American non-profit organization[15] dedicated to producing programmatic and curricular materials for teaching American Jewry about Israel—advertises the contemporaneous use of Israeli cultural output as a pedagogical tool. In the introduction to her chapter, "Contemporary Israeli Arts & Culture: The Power to Engage," American Israel educator Vavi Toran posits that "The artists who comment on Israeli culture and society through visual art, literature, poetry, film, dance, music" provide Israel educators in America with pedagogical tools "to delve into Israeli society in a way that speaks not only to the minds of students, but also to their hearts and souls." The prose wraps around a large-font quote from iconic American Jewish musical and Zionist figure Leonard Bernstein—"Music can name the un-nameable and communicate the unknowable."[16] In other words, Israeli cultural output, and, more specifically, Israeli music can be utilized to help foster an often-intangible sense of Israeli national and cultural inclusion to American Jews, in this case, within Jewish educational settings. To unpack and understand the origins and implications of these types of American Jewish musical endeavors, we must understand American Hebrew music culture's roots within the parallel

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and often overlapping histories of American and European Jews, as well as the Zionist national enterprise.

## Hebrew National Culture and Music

Since the onset of Zionist-motivated Jewish immigration to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, the formation, proliferation, and cohesion of Hebrew national culture and the modern Hebrew language were significant to the success of the Zionist national enterprise. And Hebrew music was indispensable to their evolutionary processes.[17] The varied economic backgrounds, educations, cultural orientations, religious preferences, political contexts, and mother tongues of the dominantly European Jewish immigrants arriving in Palestine between 1880–1948 posed distinctive sets of challenges to establishing a novel Hebrew national culture and language there[18]—particularly during their embryonic stages of development in the early days of Zionist immigration. During the late nineteenth century, many Jewish immigrants learned Arabic as a way to interact with Palestinian society—comprised of hundreds of thousands of Arabic speakers—and spoke Russian, Yiddish, and other European languages with each other. Nevertheless, Hebrew national culture and language rapidly emerged in Palestine during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as tens of thousands of Jews continued to immigrate and settle there. Part of this evolutionary process entailed Jewish immigrants in Palestine shedding the languages and national associations they brought from their former homelands—to be replaced with Hebrew national culture and modern Hebrew as a spoken language.[19] By the early twentieth century, a decreasing number of immigrants in Palestine learned Arabic as the *Yishuv* grew and allowed Zionists to function largely independent of Palestine's Arabic speaking society.

The development of Hebrew national culture and the modern Hebrew language was a largely international endeavor, at least until the 1920s. Many aspects of Zionism and Hebrew national culture sprang from Europe and other centers of Jewish life. Yet, as the Jewish population in Palestine continued to grow throughout the British Mandatory period (1920–48), it evolved as the center of Hebrew cultural output and language. And, as they evolved in Palestine, they also proliferated to the many Zionist communities emerging across the global Jewish diaspora.[20] This often meant that news of rapidly occurring national, linguistic, and cultural developments in Palestine took time and required channels of communication to make their way to many Jewish communities, namely in Europe and the Americas. In part through

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Hebrew music, Zionists successfully proliferated these sprouting frameworks for Jewish national and cultural identity centered on notions of a globally linked Hebraic diaspora with Palestine as its national center and modern Hebrew as its national language.

The Hebrew national culture that emerged in Palestine before Israel's establishment in 1948 went beyond providing a common social framework and language for those in the growing *Yishuv,* or a means to feel nationally and/or culturally separate from non-Jewish Palestinian society. More so, it was a fundamental component of the Zionist ideal of reimagining Jewish life, turning away from what was deemed to be a deeply damaged and ailing diasporic past in Europe.[21] As such, Hebrew national culture's evolution must be understood within the historical context of emerging national cultures across Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The vast majority of Jews in Palestine and America during this period came from Europe. Thus, both American Jewish and Hebrew national culture were influenced by the tumultuous experiences of European Jewry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as national entities and nation states formed out of European monarchies. Amidst such national shifts, Jews were largely excluded from and/or persecuted by these emerging European nations, many of which faced precarious economic circumstances and political chaos. These circumstances helped catalyze a mass exodus of Jews from Europe to the Americas, Palestine, and elsewhere surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. In the case of those Jews who left Europe for America, most sought to assimilate to the national culture that existed upon arrival. This was not the case in Palestine. As such, while American Jews formed a cultural framework for living as a minority religious community in America, Zionists utilized many familiar European national cultural trends as templates to form a novel Hebrew national culture in Palestine.

As national movements and the associated cultures developed in nineteenth century Europe, fostering a sense of national cohesion and identity amongst their members was of obvious import. Creating such a sense of cohesion often entailed promoting popular sentiments that members of a nation were part of an "organically" unified folk or people, with shared roots in an "authentic," local, and frequently peasant culture. Such emphasis on the folk was typically central to one's national identity, regardless of an individual's socio-demographic position. Even for many aristocratic elites, association with the folk was often important to their national identity and feeling authentically "German," "French," "English," etc. Shared amongst national movements experiencing these cultural evolutions in the nineteenth century

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was music as a tool in forming and proliferating national cultures—cultures based on national mythologies that didn't exist prior to the inception of the associated nation-states.[22] The Zionist movement (as well as the majority of the American Jewish community) emerged from this greater European setting; in part as a reaction to Jews often being excluded from those national movements (and music cultures)[23] forming around them. As Jewish immigration to Palestine steadily increased throughout the pre-1948 period, national institutions and cultural movements were formed there, modeled on emergent European frameworks. The result was a Hebrew national culture based on largely-secular, Euro-centric conceptions of Jewish life and national identity centered in Palestine. American Jewry used Hebrew music as a source of inclusion in a national, "organic community"; in this case though, transnationally, as a complex and important element of their lives as diasporic Jewish Americans.

While immigration to America and Palestine were just two options available to many Jews during this period, those immigration waves yielded the two largest Jewish communities in the world by the conclusion of World War II in 1945. Since American Jews and those in Palestine were often rejected by the same emergent national entities and cultures they fled, it seems natural that Hebrew national culture and its focus on Jewish renewal and even muscularity after centuries of traumas in Europe and elsewhere in the world could indeed be appealing to both. Yet, integrating into America didn't require creating a novel Jewish national culture, or association with one being created in Palestine. While Brandeis and many others argued that the Zionist national movement was important to American Jews in the early years of the twentieth century, American Jewish success first and foremost required acceptance into an often-xenophobic American society and capitalist economy as a minority religious immigrant group. Building and sustaining the *Yishuv* did require developing a novel national culture, and eventually, Hebrew culture and the *Chalutzim* of Palestine did intrigue American Jews, and became a beacon of their diasporic Jewish identity in America. However, in part a reflection of certain American Jews' anxieties that Zionism could derail their social and economic goals in the US, it wasn't until the 1930s and '40s, when American Jewry became more secure in their place in Americanness, that Zionist songs and even Hebrew national culture became widely popularized and accepted in an interdenominational, mainstream capacity.

Throughout the pre-1948 period, Hebrew songs came to the US through numerous American Zionists' efforts to collect music during trips to Palestine, or through other private channels and correspondences, such as

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Henrietta Szold's with Avraham Zvi Idelsohn. Simultaneously, certain Zionist institutions like the Jewish National Fund—tasked with raising money to purchase and develop land in Palestine and then Israel for Jewish settlement—had teams of professionals that exported Hebrew music to American Jewry from Palestine, often part of institutional fundraising campaigns vital to the land interests of Zionists settling in Palestine. Ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman contends that: "Defined most simply, national music reflects the image of the nation so that those living in the nation recognize themselves in basic but crucial ways."[24] He goes on to argue that national music often relies on imagery of land and nature, as well as national language and unity amongst a people, connected through a sense of shared history or language.[25] With Bohlman's definition of national music in mind, it certainly makes sense that Hebrew songs would be utilized by Zionist institutions prompting their national agendas in America. Likewise, we can see why early American Zionist activists and educational professionals like Szold and many others saw Hebrew music as a useful pedagogical tool to help promote American Jewish engagement with the *Yishuv*. American Zionist activists and educators successfully contributed to the growth of Hebrew national culture in America through music. Hebrew songs brought to life imagery of land in Palestine and the *Chalutzim* (Jewish Pioneers) building the *Yishuv.* Many central elements of emerging Hebrew national culture (including language) and Zionist notions of the movement being tied to a universal, biblical Jewish past there were musically communicated to American Jews through Hebrew song.

Hebrew music culture and its associated community-building qualities on the one hand served a bottom-up function for disseminating Zionist thought in America based on the perceived internal needs of the communities, their leadership, and those American Jews interested in Hebrew song and Zionism. On the other hand, Hebrew music culture was simultaneously utilized in a very top-down capacity by Zionist institutions promoting national agendas, typically relating to building spheres of ideological, financial, and political support. In both cases, the themes present, and even musical selections were quite similar and reflected similar elements of Hebrew culture and Jewish life in the *Yishuv*.[26] As such, we can see that the Hebrew national culture and music that flowered in America during the pre-1948 period represented an amalgam of local American Jewish outlooks and interests and the agendas of Zionist institutions pursuing national growth and then Israeli statehood in Palestine. And by 1948, as both communities emerged as the two main centers of global Jewish life, both largely saw the success of the other and the health

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of the relationship—despite a variety of fluctuating tensions, expectations of the other, and other complications—as beneficial to their own respective, local interests.[27]

One important component of Hebrew national culture that was musically communicated to American Jews were Zionist notions that Jews everywhere maintained a biblically rooted, national claim to land in Palestine. This message was particularly relevant to Zionists in Palestine as they sought to acculturate European Jewish immigrants arriving in the Middle East for the first time. While music's use as a tool to foster a national claim to an area is certainly not unique to Zionism,[28] it is distinctly important to analyzing Hebrew cultural evolution in America and Palestine. Hebrew music, often inclusive of European composers' interpretations of Middle Eastern musical aesthetics, promoted a yearning to live in, work, and defend land in Palestine and the east—reconstituting a perceived biblical Jewish claim to land there, a claim not reserved for those Jews gathering in the *Yishuv*. Often, such European interpretations of eastern musical aesthetics woven into Hebrew music were seen by Zionists as reinforcing a sense of ancient Jewish ties to land in Palestine and the east, regardless of their diasporic pasts throughout Europe. This was particularly relevant in the 1930s, as parallel to the rise of Nazi Germany, European Jewish immigration to Palestine rapidly increased, broadening the *Yishuv*'s demographic and cultural landscape.

Having new floods of immigrants in the 1930s—many of whom were cosmopolitan central Europeans—feel included in Hebrew national culture and Zionist claims to Palestine was of great import to political and cultural leaders in the *Yishuv*. Numerous Hebrew composers worked to utilize their interpretations of musical traditions from Jews across North Africa and the Middle East (often with a focus on Yemenite Jewish musical traditions) into their bodies of work. Israeli musicologist Motti Regev argues that it was, in fact "around 1930 that composers and lyricists started to produce the songs that were perceived as directly reflecting the experience of 'constructing the Hebrew nation.'" Further, that in the following years, Jewish composers and songwriters in Palestine and then Israel "wrote the songs that became the symbol of Israeli 'rootiness.'" In other words, the 1930s saw the emergence of Hebrew songs that symbolized Zionists' senses that they were culturally and nationally rooted in Palestine, a phenomenon achieved in part through endeavoring "to incorporate 'oriental' musical elements into their essentially East-European dispositions."[29]

These evolving Hebraic Middle Eastern musical interpretations present in Hebrew music culture (in Palestine and the US) were often referred to as

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simply being "Yemenite" in origin. Yemenite musical traditions were indeed brought to Palestine by Yemenite Jewish immigrants pre-1948. Yet, the types of "Yemenite" songs included in the following were dominantly composed by European musicians. Seroussi argues that the study of Yemenite music's role in shaping pre-1948 Hebrew music culture offers unique examples of "individual musical trajectories within diasporic Jewish spaces [and] vividly illustrates the accumulation of compound musical capitals and their circulation since the distant past." As an example, Seroussi presents the story of one Yemenite immigrant to Palestine, "Yehiel Adaqi (1903–1980), a Yemenite Jewish musician and singer," who he argues was "one of the earlier brokers" of Yemenite Jewish music in the *Yishuv*. According to Seroussi, "A chain of movements and encounters that filtered Adaqi's musical baggage mediated his transfer of musical lore from Yemen to Israel, enriching it with stylistic features that deviate from the 'authentic' Yemenite Jewish soundscape imagined by European Jewish musicians and music scholars." "In other words," Seroussi notes, "European-born Jewish musicians in Palestine/Israel who interacted with Adaqi [and other Yemenite Jewish musicians] as a reliable source of quintessential Yemenite Jewish music since the 1920s were unaware of the textured heritage this musician carried with him from his early years." Yet, Adaqi, based on his experiences in other colonial territories, "namely, Ottoman, British, French, and Italian to where the Yemenite diaspora expanded" was a "mediator, a connector, and a creator" in Palestine. In this capacity, Seroussi argues that he "informed the orientalist imagination of European Jewish composers who settled in British Palestine and dictated how the Yemenite Jewish sound, imagined by these composers to have remained immovable for two millennia, took shape." And, quite relevant to the following, Seroussi correctly notes that "this Yemenite sound made in Israel would reverberate back in the American Jewish diaspora as an index of the new musical Israeliness."[30] As the following demonstrate, the types of European-composed, Hebraic-Yemenite pieces that Seroussi describes indeed made their way to the US, and their inclusion in the American Jewish music lexicon was even a common phenomenon by the 1920s.

To understand certain components of "the Yemenite Jewish sound" that evolved in Palestine, we can find contemporary-comparative analysis in Israeli music culture through musicologist Oded Erez and anthropologist Nadeem Karkabi's article, "Sounding Arabic: Postvernacular Modes of Performing the Arabic Language in Popular Music by Israeli Jews." Today, roughly half of Israel's Jewish population is of Middle Eastern or African descent (between

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1949–1980, roughly 1 million Jews from Muslim lands immigrating to Israel, doubling her population), and local conceptions of musical traditions from these Israelis' Middle Eastern and North African homelands are important components of contemporary Israeli popular music. Erez and Karkabi argue, however, that in Israel, Middle Eastern music traditions and sounds are quite-often integrated into a fusion of genres, where Middle Eastern "ancestry serves as a pretext, used to hold together an eclectic exploration which otherwise would appear neither rooted nor coherent." They highlight contemporary, "internationally successful group Yemen Blues, led by Ravid Kahlani, a descendant of Yemenite Jews" as a case which punctuates their argument. "While Yemen Blues resorts to Yemenite roots as a point of departure [from other Israeli music], and as a framework for how they present themselves, their final musical and performative product" has "little footing in either Middle-Eastern styles or Jewish diasporic traditions."[31] So, too, is the case with a majority of the "Yemenite," "Arabic," "Bedouin" or other purportedly Middle East origins of the dominantly European-composed Hebrew songs brought to America from Palestine in the pre-1948 period, which do not sound distinctly Middle Eastern or Yemenite. Yet, many such songs brought to America included certain Middle Eastern-influenced rhythmic patterns, (modal) melodic phrasing, or melismatic runs, which injected certain Middle Eastern sounding aesthetics to the stylistically eclectic songs, clearly written by and intended for Westerners. Despite the often dubious or unclear origins, these types of Hebrew songs were framed as an indication that Jews everywhere, including America, could tap into their Hebraic national roots in Palestine and the east, sharing in what Regev referred to as "Israeli 'rootiness'" through Hebrew song.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Hebrew, the biblical language revived, or re-invented for modern use in Palestine, was no longer just a proper noun for a language associated with Jewish ritual and religious observance. It became an adjective describing Jews and Jewish national developments in the *Yishuv*, often connoting an ingathering of Jews in Palestine, returning to a non-diasporic past there.[32] Jewish labor in the *Yishuv* was "Hebrew labor" and a watermelon grown by Jews in the *Yishuv* was a "Hebrew watermelon." Jewish cultural output in the *Yishuv* was likewise Hebrew. Hebrew music had a far deeper significance than the mere fact that it was written and sung in the Hebrew language, or even in an Eastern-influenced style. It represented a globally accessible, performative affirmation of Jewish national claims to Palestine.

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## Immigration, Hebrew Music, and Notions of Diaspora in a Time of Transition

As the Zionist enterprise and Hebrew national culture evolved in Palestine—catalyzed by new immigrant groups, events in Europe, political tensions with British colonial administrators, growing intercommunal violence between Zionists and Arabs in Palestine, and Zionist institutional advancements, amongst other factors—so too did they evolve in the US based on local circumstances. This was not a singular process. Many aspects of Zionism took on different meanings and played different roles in diverse streams of American Judaism as they developed. Leaders in American Jewish communities often professed different visions of how aspects of Zionism and Hebrew culture could be twinned to and yet serve their unique approaches to Jewish communal and religious life, rapidly emerging across the US in the first half of the twentieth century. The variations of Zionist national association and Hebrew culture that developed in the US reflected many themes and elements of Hebrew culture as it formed in the *Yishuv* and can be found across Hebrew music culture in pre-1948 America.

Hebrew music in America allowed for imagery of land in Palestine, as well as depictions of life, national culture, and Zionist political causes in the *Yishuv* to be tangible, despite the distance. Musicologist Talila Eliram notes that Hebrew songs of the period in Palestine, while difficult to define as a single genre, share a common theme, "the love of the land [in Palestine, then Israel] and its scenery, which creates a sense of belonging to the land." She continues by referencing an interview she conducted with Palestinian born Israeli-entertainment-industry-icon Hanoch Hasson who argued that the ability to foster a sense of belonging to the Zionist national movement and land in Palestine is an "important criterion for defining the Israeli Folksongs." Early "Israeli folksongs are part of our being," Hanokh quipped. They are "songs that have a belonging, that portray a sense that 'this belongs to me.'"[33] Hebrew songs sung in America's diverse Jewish communities too created "a sense of belonging to the land." They allowed distant American Jews to communally express, within a Jewish religious setting or elsewhere, their awareness of, affinity for, and "belonging" to "the land and its scenery," as well as to Zionist national ambitions on that land.

Indeed, Hebrew songs' integration into American Jewish culture helped many Jews in America develop and maintain a diasporic sense of belonging to Palestine and then Israel as a homeland. The successful integration of Zionist Hebrew songs into an already robust, diverse, and ever-evolving

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Jewish music culture in America reflects established Jewish communal practices. Jewish music forms have long evolved to meet local circumstances, language, cultural patterns, and trends of various communities, including those in Europe where many American Jews emigrated from. Philip Bohlman, in reference to the evolutions of modern European Jewish music amidst the urbanization of many previously-rural-located-European Jews, argues, in fact "that cultural exchange is the rule rather than the exception in Jewish folk music . . . Hybridity, exchange, mixed repertories and styles, and bricolage in virtually every possible manifestation constantly shape tradition . . . New historical forces come to bear on the Jewish community, and folk music serves as one of the most powerful forms of enhancing those forces."[34] As historic forces shifted in America, Europe, and Palestine throughout the pre-1948 period, such established Jewish practices of musical hybridity and exchange helped Hebrew songs be easily integrated in the bricolage of American Jewish music. And while the evolutionary components of American Hebrew music culture and its transnational identity building functions are unique for numerous reasons, they too are part of broader trends amongst many diasporic groups around the turn of the twentieth century.

American Jews, of course, were not unique amongst American immigrant groups in their use of a national music form to interact with a homeland. Diasporic groups of vast origin in America during this period maintained bonds with distant homelands, source cultures, and languages through diasporic musical forms. For example, Chinese American communities—many of which find roots in New York City neighborhoods, also home to massive Jewish communities in the first half of the twentieth century—have long-maintained diverse national and liturgical music forms as part of their evolving relationships to the homeland.[35] So, too, have German Americans. Historian Victor Greene notes that German immigrants, for example, brought with them to the US "well-developed musical organizations, choruses and bands" that found musical roots in the "religious, folk, and military traditions [of the homeland]." They helped keep alive a body of German music in America, including "the most private and intimate family lullabies and the most public national marches and airs."[36] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, German musical festivals were common across the US's many German American communities. They attracted thousands of attendees and brought in many of those aforementioned choruses and bands to perform musical forms central to German national culture. Historian Heike Bungert argues that these festivals and the music forms performed at them did not just serve as nostalgic entertainment, they in fact "helped the immi-

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grants construct a German American (musical) ethnicity and assert their status in U.S. society."[37] Many ethnic groups used past musical traditions as a means of maintaining a sense of connection to their source homeland and culture while establishing novel identities in their new home.

Unique to the American Jewish community though is that it was comprised of immigrants from diverse national/geographic origins, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds, including hundreds of thousands of German Jews. American Zionists that sang Hebrew songs pre-1948 had likely not seen Palestine and only a small number of American Jews spoke emergent modern Hebrew fluently; unlike many of those German Americans of the period discussed by Greene and Bungert, who would likely have lived in communities and/or households where German was spoken by at least some, and many community members would have firsthand memories of the German homeland. Indeed, American Zionists' use of Hebrew music to define and maintain a diasporic identity is distinctive amongst examples from other immigrant groups in America. The Zionist national home, language, and culture were still forming parallel to the construction of American Judaism.

Even in this multi-linguistic context, Hebrew music culture fits into a greater understanding of music's utility for immigrant groups seeking to define and maintain diasporic and transnational identities while integrating into host societies. Sociologists Marco Martiniello and Philip Kasinitz argue that music's character as a "'promiscuous' enterprise encourages cross fertilization and discourages the idea of cultural purity." Further, they posit that music can create an artistic "place where ethnic boundaries can be reimagined, where outsiders become insiders and hybridity and genre blurring can produce some of their [artists] most widely appreciated results."[38] Building upon Bohlman's analysis of patterns of musical hybridity in European Jewish communities, Martiniello and Kasinitz's analyses can help inform our understanding of why Hebrew music's integration into America's Jewish musical lexicon indeed created an artistic space for Jewish music (as a "blurry genre") to be cross fertilized with elements of Zionist support, Hebrew national culture, and American patriotism. Historian James Loeffler correctly notes that American Zionism's roots had "an elastic character" in which "two political foci not only coexisted but also actively complemented each other in a harmonious vision of global Jewish nationhood."[39] Not being bound to cultural purity, music uniquely helped American Jews to define and actively engage in the ways these two political foci—America and the Zionist national cause in Palestine—would coexist in American Jewish life; and, like Brandeis sug-

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gested in 1915, strengthen each other in ways that suited Jewish life and communal needs in America.

The Hebrew language, for example, arguably the most important feature of Hebrew national culture, was a waning focus in American Jewish life parallel to the growth of Zionism, particularly by the 1930s. There were certainly many educational institutions—across denominations—that taught biblical and modern Hebrew, much like in twenty-first century America. Yet, Hebrew literacy was not then and is not now ubiquitous amongst most American Jews. Hebrew songs—with their ability to blur cultural lines and encourage hybridity—helped American Jews to recognize Hebrew sounds in music and even sing those memorized or transliterated words to enmesh modern Hebrew into American Jewish life. The sounds and interactive experience of singing Jewish prayers or Hebrew songs in this sense could even serve as a substitute for the meaning of the actual words. There is no way to know, for example, how many of the protestors at the beginning of this chapter understood all the words of the songs they sang. Nonetheless, the sounds of those songs and the experience of singing them together was a positive affirmation of their American patriotism, Zionist support, and, equally significant, their solidarity with Global Jewish heritage and communities, which they saw as precariously hinging upon the *Yishuv*'s success. American Jewry's unique engagements with the Hebrew language through Hebrew song in the first half of the twentieth century can be compared to a variety of historical and geographic contexts, even contemporaneous Israeli music cultural trends.

Despite a significant portion of Israeli Jews' Middle Eastern and North African cultural heritage, Arabic has ceased to be a regularly spoken language for most. However, Erez and Karkabi argue that many Israelis engage with the Arabic language through Arabic pop music, as well as other Arabic cultural output in Israel, despite a lack of widespread fluency. The authors frame the phenomenon within "what Jeffrey Shandler (2005) has termed postvernacular uses" of language. Uniquely, they note that Shandler coined the term to help analyze ways in which Yiddish transitioned away from being an important means of communication to "a ground for the cultivation of Jewish identities" in North America.[40] Erez and Karkabi posit that in Israel, "Singing old Egyptian classics in Arabic utilizes an available competency (for some of the Jewish public) and is a welcomed practice" even if that audience isn't proficient in Arabic and/or couldn't converse in the language. They go on to argue that postvernacular "contexts where Arabic is performed as part of Jewish heritage or as an object for aesthetic investment" in Israel demon-

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strate the tendency to place value on "postvernacular language from its other semiotic registers, 'as something more akin to music'" than a spoken language.[41] Much like the ways in which American Jews engaged with aspects of Hebrew national culture, language, and Zionist notions of Jewish heritage through song in pre-1948 America, despite a general lack of fluency, many Israelis engage with aspects of their own understandings of their Arabic cultural and Jewish heritages through a variety of postvernacular Arabic musical engagements. The sensations, melodies, and sounds of many songs with Jewish significance (cultural and/or religious), listened to or sung communally, in Jewish spaces, has served as a channel through which a variety of Jewish communities around the globe have maintained connections to unique and diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions alongside efforts to conform to local cultural norms and languages.

Hebrew music culture helped ground many American Jews in their Americanness and Jewishness simultaneously—in many ways complementary to Brandeis's view of Zionism's potential to help shape a patriotic and religiously engaged American Jewish community. At a time when American Jewry, much like other immigrant groups, were establishing paths toward the American middle class through military service, education, participation in the American economy, and other means, Zionist songs served multiple functions. We can certainly see them as important in linking culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse American Jews to the rapidly growing, global Zionist movement and corresponding events in the *Yishuv*. Concurrently, they served to help bolster American Judaism's vitality in the vast geographic and cultural expanse of the US by lending an often intriguing, global, Hebraic national significance to practicing Judaism in America. But of course, this phenomenon took time and great effort throughout the pre-1948 period, and varied between denominations and institutions.

During the early years of Zionist growth in the late 1800s through the early 1900s, many American Jews were interested in focusing on a Jewish life that involved integration into American society and the American economy rather than dedicating their energies toward the idea of developing a Jewish national home in Palestine. This could be in part related to a relative lack of antisemitism in the US compared to Europe. Similarly, life for Jewish immigrants in the early 1900s was not typically easy, like many other immigrant groups, and the hard work associated with becoming established in cities and towns across the US was exhausting and consuming, likely detracting from Zionist activism and engagement at the time.[42] Indeed, Hebrew music culture evolved to become one important and successful means through which

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many Jewish communal professionals and clergy offered American Jewry a sense of excitement about being Jewish through participating in aspects of Zionism.

## Judaism, Ritual Traditions, and American Hebrew Music Culture

Part of building Hebrew national culture in Palestine involved adapting elements of Jewish ritual tradition and theology to the new, largely secular Hebrew cultural context, further distancing those in the *Yishuv* from their diasporic Jewish pasts. Indeed, while Hebrew culture at times served to distance the *Yishuv* from the diaspora (sometimes quite deliberately), it simultaneously served as a mechanism to link diaspora Jewry to Zionist developments and the many political events taking place in Palestine. While it could seem counterintuitive, Zionism and Hebrew national culture—with their focus on glorifying Jewish life in Palestine, separating it from the diaspora—helped bolster Judaism in America. Zionism and its dramatic redefinition of Jewish life and identity in Palestine and then Israel came to provide a popular sense of pride and intrigue amongst many American Jews, particularly pronounced by the late 1930s–'40s. This sense has endured as a central element of many American Jews' sense of connection to Judaism and Jewish heritage, despite contemporaneous divisions between Israeli and American Jewish communities, which are certainly not new. In this sense, Zionism grew in its ability to bolster American Judaism's vitality.

Many components of the foundational elements of Zionist thought and Hebrew culture that eventually became interwoven with aspects of American Jewish life were twinned to Jewish religious practice in America through Hebrew songs. This interweaving often took place within the context of private institutions and synagogues associated with the growing denominations of American Judaism in the first half of the twentieth century, a framework entirely different than that of popular Jewish practices in the *Yishuv,* which were often framed as part of national Jewish culture in Palestine. In America, Jewish traditions like holiday celebrations were practiced as to uphold the Jewish religion and American Jewish identity in a way that aligned with norms for religious minority groups in America. An early means of promoting Zionism within these religious denominations, even making Zionism a part of American Jewish religious practice, was achieved through presenting Zionist interpretations of Jewish ritual traditions and emergent national rituals to American Jewry. Hebrew songs about these rituals, often depict-

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ing their celebration by Jews in Palestine, appear across denominations of American Judaism during this period of study and served as an important conduit for transmission of knowledge about Zionist rituals and the associated, emergent practices to American Jewry. As the following demonstrate, Hebrew songs helped American Jews integrate a variety of Zionist ritual tradition into American Jewish life.

Zionists are not exceptional in their inventing and shaping of national and religious cultural traditions as means to promote national cohesion. However, the unique nature in which Jewish holidays and emerging national rituals were fashioned to dovetail with Zionist national and cultural foci is of great relevance to Hebrew music culture and Zionism more broadly in America. One example is the Jewish holiday of *Passover*, which was reshaped in the *Yishuv* to align with emergent aspects of the Zionist national narrative. In Palestine, new *Passover Haggadahs* (liturgical books specific to the holiday) were even produced to contextualize the evolving political circumstances of the *Yishuv* within the traditional story of *Passover*. They often included new Hebrew songs written about the holiday. While there is continuity with historic Jewish practice and traditions, we can see how/that new ways of celebrating the holiday of *Passover* were conceived to support Zionists' ever-evolving national outlook and agenda. One illustration of such phenomena, found in many Zionist-reshaped *Haggadahs,* is the framing of Jews' flight from oppression in Europe to Palestine, as well as the Zionist experience in the *Yishuv* as sitting within a greater story of Jews escaping oppression throughout history; represented by *Passover*'s recounting of the Jewish escape from slavery and subsequent exodus from Egypt to the biblical land of Israel. One unique illustration of such phenomena is offered by historian David C. Jacobson in his article, "Writing and Rewriting the Zionist National Narrative." In it, he notes that "Kibbutzim in Palestine devoted sections of their Haggadah texts read on the first night of Passover to responses to the impact of the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1936–1939 on their lives." Jacobson argues that these *Haggadahs* indicate "the emergence at the time of a consensus among kibbutz members about how to tell the story of the Arab Revolt and how to situate it in the larger narrative of Zionist history and of Jewish history as a whole."[43] Jacobson's analysis is helpful in understanding similar Zionist national trends in numerous Jewish holidays; like *Passover*, *Hanuca*, *Tu B'shvat*, *Purim,* and others reshaped to illustrate contemporaneous Zionist national circumstances and intercommunal violence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, particularly by the 1930s.

As Hebrew culture progressed in the 1948-period, newly imagined secular

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Zionist national holidays such as Jewish National Fund Day and Tel Chai Day (commemorating a famous battle in northern Palestine, 1920) supplemented practicing both reinterpreted and more traditionally celebrated Jewish holidays in the *Yishuv*. Historians Yaacov Shavit and Shoshana Sitton argue that, "In the case of the new Hebrew culture (as in many other cases), a precise distinction between festival, ceremony, and ritual is not possible, nor is it important, for we are presented with a combination of all three." In other words, secular Zionist national rituals and Jewish religious celebrations in the *Yishuv* were largely conceived of as celebrations of Hebraic national identity, inclusive of Jewish religious traditions, ceremonies, and new national rituals.[44] Furthermore, new secular-national holidays created in the *Yishuv* and new interpretations of Jewish holidays were built around similar themes, typically celebrating stewardship of land in Palestine or commemorating Jewish valor and sacrifice in defending it.[45] Represented in many facets of Hebrew cultural output, new religious and secular-national rituals (and what they signified in Hebrew culture) were often introduced to American Jewish audiences through Zionist songs produced in the US and Palestine.

In the American Jewish setting, however, such Zionist reimagined Jewish holidays and emerging national rituals were typically woven into aspects of religious life and practices in synagogues and other communal spaces such as Jewish summer camps, fraternal organizations, religious schools, and youth groups, amongst many others. In the pre-1948 period, as synagogues and other Jewish communal organizations and institutions grew in their centrality to shaping and maintaining American Jewish life, these new Zionist ritual traditions and a variety of other Zionist themes and ideas were often utilized to enhance the synagogue or other Jewish communal experience. Much like in Palestine, Jews in America had to create new frameworks for adapting, expressing, practicing, and safeguarding Judaism in a new setting. And in America, upholding Jewish religious and cultural identity alongside American national identity required private religious institutions, and, equally significant, an interest amongst American Jews to both fund and participate in them. The Zionist reshaping of holidays, which often entailed attaching secular national meaning to them, thus served an entirely different function within preserving Judaism in America than it did in Palestine. In Palestine, these practices were part of developing a national culture centered around a largely secularized, national Jewish identity and Zionist national institutions. In America, particularly throughout the 1920s–'40s, they helped shape notions of private Jewish religious life and institutions that would be intriguing to growing Jewish communities there. Indeed, by the 1940s, as American

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Jews maintained widespread Zionist embrace, synagogues and other Jewish religious organizations became ubiquitous hubs of American Zionist thought, rituals, Hebrew national culture, and music. The following demonstrate that Hebrew songs about Zionist-refashioned Jewish holidays and new Zionist national holidays in Palestine were often presented alongside traditional Jewish prayers and songs in synagogues, Hebrew schools, and a variety of other Jewish communal settings throughout the pre-1948 period. For example, Hebrew songs about *Hanuca* appear within entire sections dedicated to them in American Zionist song collections from the period. Such sections often combined novel Palestinian-written *Hanuca* songs like "Mi Zeh Hidlik" with traditional songs like "Ma'oz Tzur" as to allow for the holiday rituals to remain familiar.

## The 1930s, '40s and the Shifting Tides of American Zionist Activities

Songs about new national holidays significant to Hebrew culture in the *Yishuv* like Jewish National Fund Day and Tel Chai Day certainly appear in pre-1948 American Hebrew music publications and performances. However, these holidays never gained much traction amongst or stuck as observances in American Jewish communities—despite efforts by American Jews and Zionist institutions to promote them through Hebrew songs and other means. [46] Yet, Zionist notions of Jewish military heroism, stewardship of the land of Israel, and even observance of certain Israeli national holidays commemorating wars and violence, like Israel's Independence Day (deemed an official Jewish holiday by Israel's Jewish courts in the early 1950s) and Israel's Memorial Day, did eventually become very important to many segments of American Jewry, and Israeli songs are ubiquitously included in many such celebrations and commemorations across the US today.

When Israel celebrated its first Independence Day in 1949, Israelis marched and danced in parades through the streets of Israel. Simultaneously, Jews across the US celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Jewish State, as they marched, danced, waved Israeli flags, and sang Zionist songs—as a community—in the synagogues, Jewish communal spaces, and streets of American cities, suburbs, and towns. This was a reality that many American Jews might not have imagined less than two decades before. By the mid-1930s, as violent tensions between Jews, Arabs, and the British colonial administration in Palestine spiraled out of control, Hebrew songs about many Zionist national struggles and the associated intercommunal violence in Palestine

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became more common in American Hebrew music culture. While themes of violence and political tensions in Palestine were certainly woven into songs about holidays and rituals, many songs written expressly about Jewish military activities and moments of violence in Palestine were increasingly circulated.

The 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, according to the US State Department's Office of the Historian, "limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota. The quota provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States as of the 1890 [a time with few Jews in America, as the flood was just beginning] national census. It completely excluded immigrants from Asia."[47] The 1924 congressional act's restrictive quota remained in place until the early 1950s and notably cut off European Jews' access to America as they saw the rise of Nazism and then perished in the Holocaust. Throughout Johnson Reed's enforcement, public figures like Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh espoused a populist, antisemitic, nativist, and generally xenophobic platform in the US, even as part of the Republican party's ideological creed. Many American Jews (often supportive of the Democrat party's more pro-immigrant platform by the early 1930s) were weary of potential backlash for focusing too much public effort fighting against these American political and ideological trends. Particularly since Jews were regularly viewed by many in the American right as subversive, "globalist" outsiders, backlash from figures like Ford, Lindbergh, and their associates was often avoided. Throughout the 1930s, as American Jews watched the rise of Nazi Germany and parallel upsurge of violence between Jews, Arabs, and the British colonial administration in Palestine, a sense grew amongst many, including many previously-non-Zionists, that Zionist support could constitute a path of some kind toward helping Jews in need around the world, barred from entry to America. The US government (particularly among its more right-wing, xenophobic factions) showed little interest in budging on opening immigration to or helping European Jewry as things worsened.

Participating in Zionist causes and Hebrew national culture was one way Jews could feel a sense of agency amidst the helplessness of watching Hitler's rise to power and all that followed throughout the 1930s. Then came a significant turning point in both American Zionism as well as political circumstances in the *Yishuv*. In 1939, the British enacted a policy in the form of a White Paper, which restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 over a five-year period, coinciding with the outbreak of WWII just months later and the Jewish Holocaust in Europe. This policy was broadly viewed as constituting a virtual writ of divorce between the British government and

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Zionists and can be seen as one significant catalyst in shaping the strong American Zionist embrace of the 1940s–today, already brewing before the start of WWII.

Britain's strict limitations on Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine—a strategy intended to tamp down mounting Jewish-Arab violence (often relating to tensions over increased immigration there by the growing number of European Jews seeking refuge)—served as a lightning rod for American Jewry's support of and interest in being associated with the Zionist cause. Concern in American Jewish communities for European Jewry's safety naturally grew. Following news of the Holocaust becoming widespread in 1942, many American Jews saw such British restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine alone as an impetus for supporting the Zionist cause and its efforts to overturn or fight against those policies—including certain violent tactics. Seeking to find a solution to the increasingly destitute circumstances of Europe's Jewish population surrounding the events of WWII served as a significant gateway for many American Jews to engage with numerous aspects of Zionist thought, activities, and music culture throughout the 1940s. Seeing free Jewish immigration to Palestine as necessary to relocate homeless and insecure Jewish refugees, many American Jews increasingly became sympathetic to and informed about Zionist political and cultural developments, including the more violent aspects of life in the *Yishuv*.

By the 1940s, many American Jews found that, by and large, supporting the Zionist cause and participating in Hebrew national culture would not necessarily harm their claims to Americanness or social and economic upward mobility. One simple piece of this reality could be that American Jewish support for Zionist causes meant Jewish refugees would be more likely to go to Palestine than America, where they were not wanted by the antisemitic, nativist, and/or isolationist elements of the American political establishment and population. Parallel to Zionism's growing level of acceptance in American culture, society, and politics, Hebrew national culture's inclusion in American Jewish religious life and practices as well as American financial support of the *Yishuv* grew. The latter part of the 1930s until Israel's declaration of statehood saw the development of many aspects of today's American Jewish-Israel relationship. An important component of this relationship was fostering a strong sense of inclusion in the Zionist cause astride a firm commitment to establishing enduring and patriotic Jewish communities in America. Analyzing American Hebrew music culture's evolution in the pre-1948 period allows for a greater understanding of American Jewish-Zionist engagement.

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## Chapter Summaries

The pages that follow offer readers four unique case studies and an epilogue that analyze and contextualize unique aspects of Zionism and Hebrew music culture's parallel evolutions in America. These studies, while focused on the first half of the twentieth century, illuminate central themes, patterns, and historic contexts crucial to informing discourse on the American Jewish-Israel relationship and its complex origins. Chapter I, "Stephen S. Wise, The Jewish Institute of Religion, Abraham Wolf Binder, and *New Palestinean Folk Songs* in America" explores how Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise—amongst numerous colleagues—sought to challenge mainstream Reform Jewish notions that Zionism was antithetical to Jews' success in America, a position publicly espoused by the majority of Reform leaders until the 1930s. Wise established the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in 1922, a seminary that served as his institutional rebuttal to the mainstream Reform establishment, including their non- or anti-Zionist views. One early and important faculty hire at JIR was Abraham W. Binder (1895–1966), a young, New York-based Jewish musician and educator, already known as a rising star of Hebrew music in America. For Binder, this was the beginning of a career-long journey to integrate Hebrew national culture and music into Reform Rabbinic education and American Jewish life more broadly. The chapter also showcases the work of reform educator and musician Irma Cohon. Cohon, a strong supporter of Zionism and student of Hebrew music, published an important Jewish songbook in the 1920s intended for use in American Jewish education, helped launch Avraham Zvi Idelsohn's career in America through her contacts in the Reform world, and coauthored a songbook with Idelsohn in 1925. This chapter offers rich analyses of Hebrew music's place in the process that historian Jonathan Sarna refers to as "Reform Judaism's conversion to Zionism" in the pre-1948 period.

Chapter II, "Solomon Schechter, The Jewish Theological Seminary, the Goldfarbs, and Harry Coopersmith" explores how Solomon Schechter—the founder of the American conservative movement (United Synagogue of America, established in 1913) and then head of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York—helped establish theological, social, and educational frameworks central to American Zionism's evolution and sustenance. He publicly extolled the virtues of Zionism in a 1906 pamphlet titled *Zionism: A Statement*, proclaiming that Zionism could serve as a "a tower of strength and of unity not only for the remnant [Jews] gathered within the borders of the Holy Land, but also for those [Jews] who shall, by choice or

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necessity, prefer what now constitutes the Galut [Jewish diaspora]." These early conceptions of Zionism's ability to be compatible with—and even bolster the vitality of—American Judaism were significant in shaping American Jewish life, education, and Hebrew music culture. For example, the Conservative Movement's first comprehensive curricular guide (1922) for its education system, suggested that should an educator want to "create a pride in the great Jewish heritage and to cultivate an abiding interest in Jewish life and an attachment to the great body of the living Jewish people" they could do so, in part, by teaching "[Hebrew] folk-songs" for the purpose of "impart[ing] to the children such knowledge of Palestine as will give it a permanent place in their thoughts as well as in their affections." Such songs in the 1920s were taught and published by Conservative educators and musicians like Thelma Goldfarb, who published the Zionist songbook *Echoes of Palestine* in 1929. Her Hebrew musical works are referenced throughout numerous sources in the following, including *The Jewish Home Beautiful* (published by the Women's League of Conservative Judaism in 1941). This chapter shows the many unique ways in which Conservative Jewish leaders' educational endeavors and outlooks were integral to the spread of Zionism, Hebrew national culture, and Hebrew music in American Judaism throughout the pre-1948 period.

Chapter III, "Mordecai and Judith Kaplan, Avraham Zvi Idelsohn, and Moshe Nathanson—Voices of Palestine" analyzes the unique Hebrew cultural endeavors of JTS professor, rabbi, and Jewish thinker Mordecai Kaplan, his daughter Judith, and his longtime music director, Palestinian-born Cantor Moshe Nathanson. Mordecai Kaplan, Judith Kaplan Einstein, and Nathanson had long and prolific careers in America that spanned decades and were significant contributors to the process of integrating aspects of Zionism, Hebrew national culture, music, and the modern Hebrew language into Jewish education, religious life, and popular culture. In addition to his work as a cantor, composer, and educator, Nathanson was a pioneer of bringing Zionist songs and "Yemenite, Palestinian Hebrew" to American radio waves. Nathanson and Mordecai Kaplan—beyond their professional ties—shared a connection to renowned Jewish composer, educator, and musicologist Avraham Zvi Idelsohn, a figure important to the evolution of Hebrew music culture in Palestine and America. Idelsohn relocated to the United States in 1922 after nearly two decades in Palestine, and his contributions to American Zionism and Hebrew national culture reverberated far beyond his time teaching and mentoring a young Nathanson, then a child prodigy singer in Jerusalem. One of Idelsohn's most important contributions to American Zionism and Hebrew music culture

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was the legitimacy he provided to Hebrew music in America's secular music world. Kaplan Eisenstein was likewise a prolific writer, musicologist, and educator who taught musical pedagogy at JTS from 1929–1950s, then went on to teach at the Reform seminary after receiving her PhD. She produced numerous important Hebrew musical publications and curricular pieces, in addition to her work as a performer. This chapter demonstrates how Mordecai Kaplan and Idelsohn's work helped establish the broader context in which Nathanson and Kaplan Eisenstein brought Hebrew songs to so many American Jews, pre-1948 and beyond.

Chapter IV, "The Jewish National Fund Land Purchases in Palestine, Fundraising in America, and Hebrew Music" demonstrates that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was central in establishing frameworks for American Jewish engagement with Zionist institutions during the pre-1948 period—in part through activities like singing Hebrew songs and donating to Zionist land interests in Palestine administered by the JNF. In July 1942, for example, the JNF published the first of five separately themed Zionist songbooks produced for an American Jewish audience, under the title *Classified Palestine Songs*. The foreword to the first volume, Camp Issue, posits that "The spirit of a Zionist group may often be fairly reflected in the fervor with which its members sing Palestine melodies." As such, "The Overseas Youth Department of the Jewish National Fund has embarked upon a new scheme for the presentation of Palestine songs in a manner calculated to satisfy all the requirements of the teacher and youth instructor in the field [in America]." This series of songbooks was one important piece of a greater body of JNF propaganda, educational, and fundraising materials developed for American Jewry during the *Yishuv* period. This chapter explores the use of Hebrew music from Palestine in the JNF's greater efforts to build a robust donor base and spheres of support amongst American Jewish communities during the pre-1948 period, both of which were crucial to the success of the Zionist enterprise in the later years of the British Mandate. Further, the chapter explores ways that American Jewish women involved with the activities of the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America, along with other women's groups that worked with the JNF, greatly contributed to the spread of Hebrew music, the Zionist fundraising agenda, women's access to a variety of activist and professional outlets, as well as the JNF's ultimate success in American Jewish philanthropic markets. By the conclusion of WWII—contrasting the decimation of Europe, European Jewry, and the associated fundraising markets—American Jewry donated to the JNF at higher rates than the rest of the Jewish diaspora combined. At the same time, the JNF

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and Hadassah contributed significantly to the development and proliferation of Hebrew culture and transnational Zionist engagement in America.

The Epilogue offers concluding thoughts about the ways Hebrew music helped American Jewry define and maintain often complex diasporic connections to a homeland while establishing novel identities, as well as communal and religious institutions in their new home. Musicologist Su Zheng offers insightful comparative analysis, noting that Chinese American music culture is "a dynamic triangular motion involving the immigrant/ethnic society, the host country and the homeland" where "Chinese American music culture interacts with these forces at the same time it is shaped by them." In other words, Zheng is reminding her readers that Chinese American music culture, like many diasporic music cultures, was not at any period and is not now static or self-contained. Rather, it is constantly evolving out of a complex series of interactions between diverse Chinese Americans; evolutions in American political, social, and cultural trends outside the community; and evolutions in China's own social, religious, and cultural dynamics, as well as her political landscape (which, like the *Yishuv* and then Israel, often include complex relations with America). As shown in *Singing the Land*, Hebrew music culture in America was similarly shaped and informed by a variety of local circumstances and considerations amongst American Jews and their reactions to American culture, politics, and society, as well as foreign forces in Palestine, Europe, and other parts of the Jewish diaspora and world. And while shaped by all these evolutions and reactions, Hebrew music culture also interacted "with these forces" in a way that offered the American Jewish community a means to learn about Zionism and participate in it in different ways as it evolved pre-1948. Amidst quickly changing and grave circumstances for Jews in a variety of locations in the first half of the twentieth century, Hebrew songs evolved to become a bonding agent of American Jewish unity and diasporic identity.

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