

Nusach:

Singing in Sacred Time





What is Nusach?

A musical mode or pattern of notes that are used in prayer to situate us in Jewish time and place. From listening to the Nusach of the prayer services we can discern what time of day it is, whether it is a weekday, Shabbat, or Festival, and other nuances that help us to orient our spiritual lives.

Nature- has different sounds in the morning and in the evening.



For Example- The Cardinal

Cardinal's Evening Song-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5x0H7oGSCX8>

Cardinal's Morning Song- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fieT7tz7eU4>

The different tunes indicate the time of day and serve to communicate one bird to another. If a Cardinal were to sing the evening song in the morning, it could disrupt the balance of all the different animals in relationship with the Cardinal.



Judaism favors distinction and making ceremony out of separation- one of the ways this is done is through having distinct melodies for different situations.

While Nusach isn't as "life or death" to the ecosystem as a bird call might be, certain melodies of time and space stir our psyche in certain, particular ways, opening portals and channels of connection with millions of other Jews and our ancestors since the beginning of time.



What are some of Judaism's polarities that might be highlighted through music?

- Day and Night
- Shabbat and Chol (Weekday)
- Light and Dark
- Festival and Chol
- High Holiday and Chol
- Simchas and Sadness
- Joy and Grief

And all combinations of the above



Nusach modes and terms to explore together

- Weekday minor (Torah blessing minor)
- Ahava Rabba (Freygish)
- Pentatonic (5 note scale)
- Adonai Malach (Major)
- Magen Avot
- Misinai Tunes (mostly HHD and Festival)
- Motif
- Trope
- Congregational Melodies



Weekday: Ma'ariv, Shacharit, Mincha

- Weekday Ma'ariv Service
 - Ahava Raba- with motives on top half of scale (use through Chatsi Kaddish)
 - Kaddish Shalem-End of service- utilizes minor or congregational melody in minor

Examples = Havdalah, Quando El Ray Nimrod



Weekday Shacharit

- Shacharit
 - Birkot HaSha'ar (Morning Blessings)-up until Yishtabach = minor
 - Yishtabach- PIVOT to Ahava Raba
 - Yishtabach-Tzur Yisrael- Ahava Raba
 - Avot (Amidah)-Sim Shalom = Pentatonic (ALL WEEKDAY AMIDAH CHANTED IN PENTATONIC)
 - Chatsi Kaddish- end = minor. **(ALL WEEKDAY KADDISHES (non Rosh Chodesh/Festival) are minor or Ahava Raba)** The only time Kaddish is chanted Major is on Shabbat (sometimes) or HHD or Festival. This is SPECIAL and a distinction.
 - Psalm of day is Major



Weekday Mincha

- Ashrei through Chatsi Kaddish = minor
- Avot through Shalom Rav = Pentatonic
- Kaddish Shalem = minor
- What nusach is used for El Male?
- Though called for minor at the end, we often chant Aleinu using what mode?



REVIEW and QUESTIONS

- Examples of the different modes and slide #5
- What stays the same in all weekday non festival services? Give some characteristics of the weekday services- why might this be?
- What changes between the services at different times of day?
- Cantor Give some Examples and have members of the class place the music within a service.