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The Diwan Songs of the Jews of the Manakha Community in Central Yemen

Poetry-Melody-Dance

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Introduction

Songs and dances of Yemenite Jews are essential components of the evolving Israeli culture. Born and educated in Israel, we find ourselves connected to them from childhood and youth. Thus, it was only natural for us to focus on the Yemenite Jewry in our ethno-musicological and ethno-choreological research. The subject had been substantially investigated before. However, because of its vastness, research has been focused only on a limited selection out of the bounty of material, and in too generalizing a manner, based on the restricted scope of data available to researchers at the time.

In traditional cultures there is always reciprocity between the continuity of the tradition itself, and the influences of the environment. The goal of this work is to document one particular tradition, select a defined scope, and explore it in the most exhaustive manner possible.

From the three major layers of Yemenite-Jewish poetry – liturgical (Synagogue) poetry, para-liturgical poetry (Diwan), and secular (female) poetry – we have chosen the **Diwan**, for the following reasons:

First of all, the **Diwan** is an entity of poetry-melody-dance, and still exists in the contemporary Yemenite-Jewish life cycle and year cycle.

Second, the Diwan is written mainly in the Hebrew language, along with some Arabic and Aramaic.

Third, it deals with sanctity, yet does not belong in a synagogue, and is therefore more accessible.

In addition, the Diwan contains the dance, which is a key component in the Yemenite-Jewish lifestyle.

Another reason for our choice is, that more than any other layer out of the entire complex of Yemenite-Jewish poetry, it was the Diwan which had the strongest influence on the evolving Israeli culture, in terms of folk song and dance aspects, as well as in the concert hall and the theater. Finally, this entity of poetry-melody-dance has been preserved to this day in its traditional formats. Its detailed documentation is of utmost importance,

After years of extensive recording and filming sessions on location, and encounters and interviews with experts who are natives of several districts in Yemen, we have reached the conclusion that it is most essential to concentrate on and examine one particular Yemenite tradition. We need to study its continuity in one particular community in Israel. In this manner we can explore what has been preserved intact; how this material has been passed on from generation to generation; how the tradition is maintained nowadays. Finally we can document the nature of the bilateral relationships between this tradition and the culture currently evolving in Israel.

This preliminary research work has suggested that major differences exist between the central districts of Yemen (San'a – the capital and its vicinity), the northern (Haydan) and the southern district (Haban, Aden). Our decision to focus on central Yemen stems from the fact that San'a was a social-cultural-rabbinical center. Jews lived apart from the non-Jewish population, secluded in their town quarter. The Jews of San'a rarely danced, due to the rabbis' stringent attitude to this art form. Jewish singers and dancers from nearby settlements were summoned to San'a to perform at weddings), we targeted our search at a central district settlement other than San'a itself. We then approached natives of that region who are currently residing in several settlements in Israel, in order to observe how Diwan poems are integrated in their way of life.

We decided to focus on a group of Yemenite Jews, originally from Manakha and currently residing in Kiryat Ono. With this group we continued our fieldwork while delving further into it, exhausting to the fullest the topic of our choice; documenting and recording all the Diwan poems as performed by the members of the group today. We traced their origin to the tradition customary in their native city. We filmed and documented dances currently performed to Diwan poems.

We selected this particular group primarily because it manifested a unique example of an extended family and community life, rarely found elsewhere in Israel. An active tradition, encompassing three generations and strongly anchored in the life of both the family and the community has been able to sustain itself. In addition, we became acquainted with the group's central figure, Menachem Arussi, a merited leader and teacher. A devoted disciple of the Yemenite tradition, he serves as the link between his own and his forefathers' and teachers' generations, and the younger generation, for whom he is a dedicated mentor. His has dexterity and mastery in performing the songs, as well as his extraordinary gift for dancing. His talents are highly regarded throughout the whole Yemenite-Jewish community, not just in his extended family. Above all, he is a reliable informant. All these qualities have made him the group's leader, hence his central role in this research.

Our selection has been influenced by several other central figures in the group, who were the disciples or the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, back in Yemen and later on in Israel. These people deem it highly significant for the songs and dances to be performed in the exact manner customary back in Yemen. Under contemporary circumstances, having to adapt themselves to the limitations of modern times, they do so in a conscious manner. They discard the trivial elements and maintain the essence. For example, time and place constraints may dictate cutting the songs a few verses shorter, a quite likely occurrence which is consistent with the principle of verses and melody selection. However, the continuity of the entity Nashid-Shira-Hallel, the three major Diwan forms, would still be preserved. When singing and dancing, they always keep the book of poems – the Diwan – in their hands. They follow and choose, just as they did back in Yemen.

Last and foremost is the fact that Menachem Arussi and all the members of the group are highly aware of the importance of documenting, recording and research as means of preserving the Yemenite-Jewish tradition. They are aware of imparting it to members of the community, the younger generation in particular. They are also well aware of the Yemenite-Jewish contribution to the culture and art evolving in Israel. They are concerned and grieved by the devaluation in the attitude of members of the community to their own cultural-artistic heritage, especially having personally experienced the struggles of maintaining this tradition in the years following their immigration and absorption in Israel.

Our contact with the group was initiated in 1975. The preliminary encounter was clouded by natural doubts. We had no idea whether and how we would be accepted, and whether we

would manage to secure their cooperation. The group members had their doubts as well, having experienced previous failed attempts to cooperate with outside bodies. The first to respond to our request and open his heart and home to us was Menachem Arussi. After a while, he and the rest of the group realized the sincerity of our intentions to document, transcribe and record all Diwan poems sung by them, as well as to study and explore the dances. Their cooperation became complete, with a sense of absolute mutual trust. Throughout the years we have visited in Kiryat Ono innumerable times, both on scheduled encounters for the purpose of recording and documenting, and in family events celebrated by members of the group, which we were invited to attend in the most natural and familiar way. Later on, we shared hundreds of hours of recordings for records and CDs, journeys abroad when the group was invited to sing and dance in Europe, and in video and filming sessions.

Along the years, the bond between us and the Manakha community in Kiryat Ono has grown stronger. We gained friends and mentors. Together with the group we have scanned the entire Diwan, and recorded everything they regularly sang out of it. This numbers about a hundred poems, some of them very common and performed on a weekly basis, and others less frequent, saved for special occasions. The dances that are performed with the **Shirot**, were filmed at henna and wedding ceremonies. The same hundred songs were recorded many times. Each was recorded at least twice, usually with a considerable interval between recordings. In many cases they were recorded more than twice, sometimes up to ten times, in order to discern the constant from the varying. Each poem has usually more than one melody. It is customary to change melodies from one verse to the next, for the sake of variety and maintaining interest. On the other hand, one melody may serve several poems, and does not pertain to one particular poem. This article is by no means the final stage in our research, but rather an interim phase, dedicated to the organization of the information gathered and outlining new challenges.

From Manakha to Kiryat Ono

The city of Manakha is situated in the Haraz mountain region, southwest of San'a, midway between San'a and the port town Hudayda. As far as the Jewish community in Yemen is concerned, Manakha formed a western border to the central height of Yemen (Seri 1991: 71). A primary trade center for Jews from settlements all over the area, the city had a weekly market day. 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 Semach, who visited Yemen in 1910, reported that there were 252 Jews in the city (see his report he published in the 1911 bulletin of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, published in French, p.160, no.98). Rabbi Abraham 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, although inferior to San'a, the capital, still functioned as centers for the lesser communities in the towns and villages in their vicinity (Tobi 1977A, p.154).

Jacob 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.

Tobi, (Tobi 1977B, p.69), presents an overview of the Manakha community as related by Eliahu Ben Salem Ben Yitzhak Giat, who was born in Manakha in the Jewish year of 5666 (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 community. Most of its members dealt in trade, and enjoyed a much stronger civil standing than members of other communities. This was due not only to their better economic status, but also to the fact that the Manakha Jews did not suffer from persecutions 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 p.40). As he mentions prominent families in the community, he notes among its scholars "Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri, now residing in Kifyat Ono, Israel". Indeed, Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri died in Kiryat Ono in 1981. The members of the Manakha congregation 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.

Immigration from Yemen to Israel

Even today, fifty 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. A generation later, following a period of severe suffering and struggles, they can finally regard themselves as full-fledged Israeli citizens.

The term "group" refers to the ten to twelve men, who gradually became a permanent group. This is 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 interrelationship, is 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.

Group Members

The late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri (1884-1981), born in Manakha, resided in Israel since 1949.

Menachem Arussi (1936-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1949.

The late Haim Ozeiri (1937-1989), born in Manakha, resided in Israel since 1949.

Yehiel Ozeiri (1946-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1949.

Aharon Cohen (1927-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1950.

Danny Cohen (1957-), born in Kiryat Ono, disciple of Menachem Arussi.

Uri Cohen (1957-), born in Kiryat Ono, disciple of Menachem Arussi.

Yehiel Tsabari (1933-), born Arhab district, living in Israel since 1949.

Shalom Keisar (1925-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1949.

Shlomo Yemini (1942-), born in San'a, living in Israel since 1949.

Shimon Tsadok (1937-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1950.

Ratson Tsadok (1946-), born in Manakha, living in Israel since 1950.

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. All problems 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.

In the background of the group's activity, there was always the figure of the late Rabbi Shalom Ozeiri. He is perceived, by group members, as their teacher of religious practice and as an excellent singer and dancer. He is accepted by all as the supreme authority. Many of the group members were his pupils in their childhood, back in Manakha. 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.

The common origin of the group members is a prerequisite for its existence. Indeed, almost all of the group members were born in Manakha. Those not born there have either joined the group through marriage with Manakha women who are related to the rest of the members. Some 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. They were 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 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. Rarely do they meet in other members' houses, or in public places provided to the group for the purpose of teaching children and youth. 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.

The group members are integrated in the community life. They 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, formed 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 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. They perform in academic institutes and public events, and even abroad. They participate in international forums and produced several records and cassettes (see discography).

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 Mori (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. Most children attend them. The songs are learned primarily by listening and memorizing. The dances are learned by observation and imitation. The group members are involved in the organization of these activities. 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.

The relationships between group members are based on their recognition of each member's unique personality. They acknowledge 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. When one of the members is unable to function, there is always a temporary stand-by available. Menachem Arussi is the supreme authority, deciding who dances and who sings, and is always consulted on all matters. All the members always discuss issues. The arbiter, whose opinion is accepted by everyone, is usually Menachem Arussi.

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 generation.

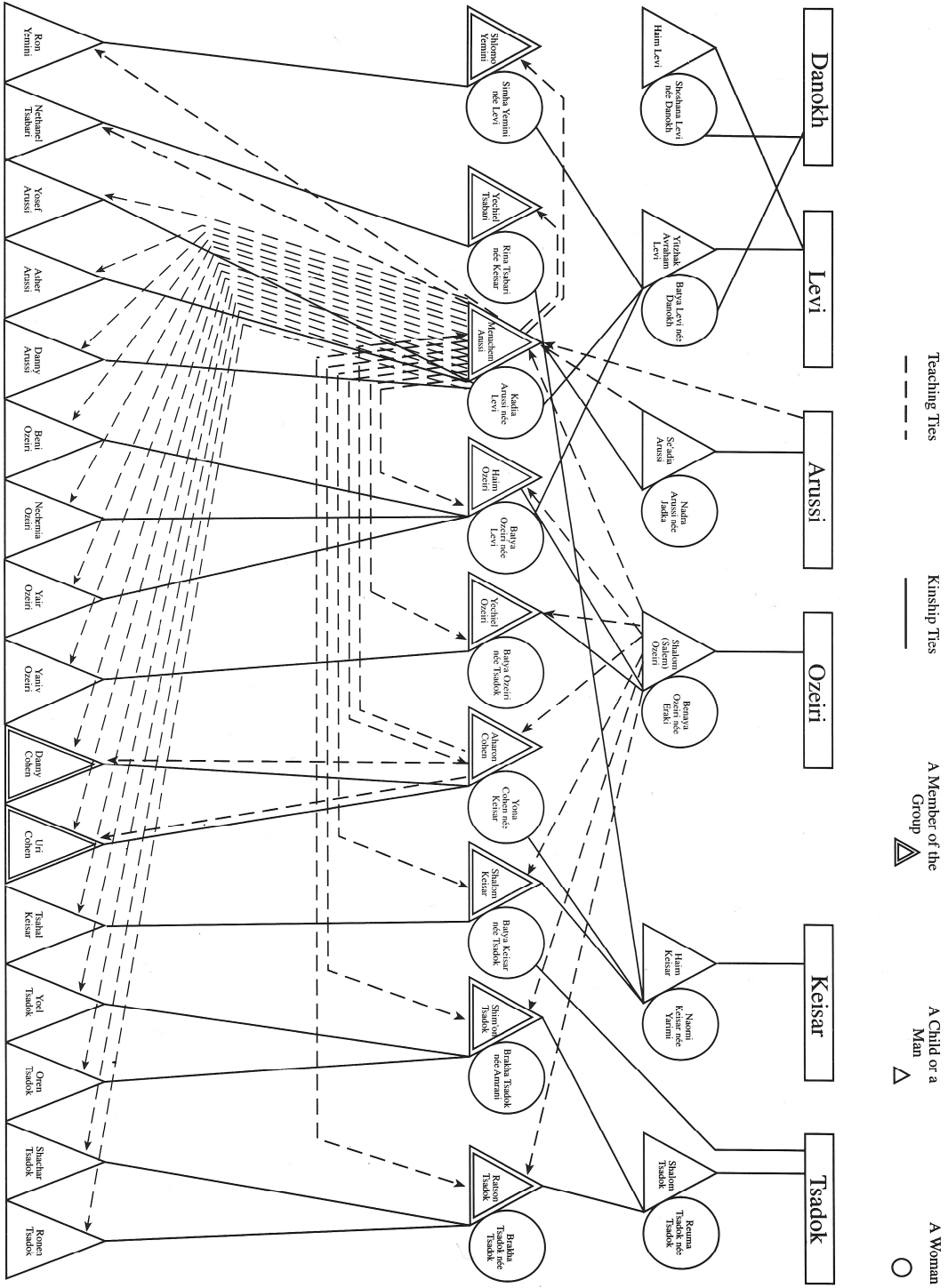
The diagram on the next page illustrates the family and teaching ties spanning three generations. The first generation is the fathers, who were born in Yemen and immigrated to Israel as adults. The intermediate generation is that of the group members, who immigrated from Yemen in their childhood and 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. Others have participated, or are currently participating, in the tutorial groups.

The Diwan: Poetry, Melody, Dance

The Diwan is one of Yemenite Jewry's three basic books. The second, the Taj, is the Pentateuch with Onkelos translation and interpretations. The third, the Tikhlal, is the daily and holidays prayer book. The Diwan is a paraliturgical collection of songs concerning Jewish holidays, events in Jewish history, and the longing for salvation in Zion. It is used at home, in family, and in community forums.

There were no printing houses in Yemen. All the books were handwritten and copied by hand. While only authorized scribes of Holy Scriptures wrote prayer books, the Diwan could be copied by anyone. Printed Diwans have been introduced only in Israel. They currently replace the handwritten books. The Diwan is written entirely in Hebrew letters, but contains three

Kinship and Teaching Ties in the group



languages: Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic (see: Amalel Shir, Hafetz Haim, Ratzavi 1968 pp.30-46; 1988 pp.11-45). Indeed, the practice of mixing languages in Hebrew poetry had already begun in medieval Spain (Idelsohn 1923 p.13). 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 hemistiches, as in the song Sharad Manami (92), and even within hemistiches, as in Amalel Shir (43).

The Diwan was created over a period ranging approximately from the 11th to the 18th century. The earliest works included in it were written by the leading Hebrew poets of the Golden Age of Spain: Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, Abraham Ibn Ezra and others. The most recent ones are by Yemenite Jewish poets succeeding Shalom Shabazi. Many Diwans mistakenly bear the name of Shalom Shabazi. However, they contain many poems by other poets. Nevertheless, the majority of the Diwan poems were indeed written by Shalom Shabazi. 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 be identified by acrostics at the top of the stanza, but many remain anonymous.

In the collection offered in our book, which is the selection performed by Manakha Jews in Israel, forty-three poems were written by Shalom 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 to four poems: four poems by Yossef Ben Israel, four by Se'adia (one is marked Se'adia Ben Amrarn), and two each by Avraham Ben Halfon, David, Shlomo and Avraham. Evyatar, David Ben Yossef, Aaron Menzali, Yosef, Yehuda Ben Sa'id, Israel Bar Moshe (Najara), Zecharia Eldahari, Hisdai, Yosef Ben Moshe, Yehuda, Shimon Ben Shalom, 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. The Hallelot poets are all anonymous, as are some of the poets of the most common wedding songs. This might explain why some prefer to regard them as part of the Hallelot (see Amalel 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. Others are performed only in certain communities. In Israel nowadays, there are mostly printed Diwan compilations, particularly Hafetz Haim and Shirei Harav Hagaon Shalom Shabazi [Songs of the Great Rabbi Shalom 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 mainly according to their function and structure. In traditional Diwans they are presented according to their functional and formal classification, and we follow 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 term of function, there are two groups in the year-cycle, which include Sabbath and holiday poems. There are two groups in the life-cycle, which include wedding and circumcision poems.

Year Cycle and Life Cycle

All the year-cycle and life cycle poems are relatively short. 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. They are integrated in the life cycle and year-cycle festivities according to the singers' choice and the community's practices.

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. Diwan songs are sung at home, usually at the dining table, before and 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.

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. They too may be divided into two sub-groups: completely improvisational and relatively free form.

Holiday songs feature very little in the Diwan. This does not mean that there is less singing during the holidays. On the contrary. But on 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 *Atsula Lefanim Bekhise Aravot* by Abraham Ibn Ezra, is part of the Tikhlal. It is also included in certain Diwans as an appendix. 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 with a bolting rhyme that is more than a rhyme: the last hemistich of all stanzas is the same in BEYOM HAPESACH. Only two of this group are typically rhythmical and both holiday songs: SHADAY EL MA NORA (16) and SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM (17). The rest have a free rhythm and improvisational style.

Wedding songs accompany wedding ceremonies in their entirety, Besides the specific wedding songs for the ceremony and other events in the course of the celebration, there are many other songs, Nishwad, girdle songs and Shirot, and of course the weddings Hallelot, which are customarily performed at the wedding ceremonies and during the seven days of festivities. Wedding songs are the oldest In the Diwan. Four of them were written by Yehuda Halevi, one of the great poets of medieval Spain. His poems appear in the most ancient Diwan compilations in Yemen. They are very popular because of the style in which some of them are written, i.e. several phrases in which one word keeps changing in alphabetical order: Ahuv, Baruch, Gibor, Dagul, etc. These are AHUV YEVARECH HECHATAN (26) AHUV MEHAR HAMOR (27) ASHIRA LE'AHUV (29), constituting a unique group, which 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.

In terms of structure, the songs are divided into forms:

- 1) Shir (song, in Arabic – Nashid, and Nishwad in the plural form), and
- 2) Shira (poem, and in the plural form: Shirot),
- 3) Hallel (Praise, and in the plural form: Hallelot), along With several other intermediate or unique forms.

The majority of Diwan are Shirot. They 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 to 11 verses each). 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 as 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 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 of the Nishwad consist of two hemistiches, 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), AYUMATJ 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 hemistiches, and may be regarded as a transitional form to the girdle song. The term "stanza" in a Spanish Golden Age poem refers to a verse in the Qasida. The first three hemistiches of every stanza rhyme with each other. The last hemistich rhymes with the "guide" (opening rhyme) of the entire poem in a 'bolting' fashion, as in AGIL VE'ESMACH (18) and ODE LE'ELI (39).

From the 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 processional song as the bridegroom or the bride is delivered to the location of the ceremony. The Chaduya is a general song of joy. These include many greeting songs, in which one word is successively changed in alphabetical order, as mentioned before.

Girdle poems are an ancient form, originating in the Spanish Golden Age. They usually consist of stanzas of four rhyming lines. 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. Their closing verse 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 hemistiches (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. The closure (the 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 Halleot 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. Unlike the rest of the Diwan poems, it is nonmetric, with varying verse lengths. There are no Halleot in Arabic in the Diwan. The majority of the Halleot are in Hebrew. A few are in Aramaic. The closing verse of the Hallel is often a biblical quotation. It seems that the Halleot were originally devised as a rhyming elaboration of that closure .

The singing of the Halleot resembles the singing of prayers, a fact that might indicate their ancient origin. One of the singers begins the Hallel, thus determining which Hallel is to be sung. All other people present join in at the second verse, even those who just finished dancing, and in that manner, the blessing becomes general.

Halleot 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". Halleot 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) .

The Hallelot contain praises addressed at various figures, depending on the nature of the events 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. 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. All Hallelot begin and end with the word "VeHalleluya" (and praise the Lord), which is also written at the ends of 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 Amalel 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 study group, used to sing sixteen Hallelot, out of which four or five are the most frequently sung. We recorded these sixteen Hallelot many times through the years, enabling us to discern the singing principles pertaining to all Hallelot,

The variety of poetical meters in the Diwan is great. These include 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 used here 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). They are performed in free rhythm or short and simple melodies. Syllable meters were customary in Spanish poetry for liturgical poems, and these songs in the Diwan are indeed the most ancient ones, mostly anonymous. Some have alternating words in alphabetical order, attesting to their affinity with liturgical poems.

Nevertheless, these songs comprise only a tenth of our collection. All the rest are metered in metric feet. Some have 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. 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. This is probably based on the ancient tradition. They often determine the punctuation and accentuation, even if they contradict the sequence of the words.

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 20th century by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn. He was followed by many others. The first recordings were made by Idelsohn. Most of them are kept in the National Sound Archives in Jerusalem (Idelsohn 1909, 1918, 1923).

The Yemenite-Jewish music has been extensively studied. However, Diwan poems were recorded and recognized, not necessarily through research, but rather due to their public prevalence, as part of the evolving Israeli culture (Bahat, Bahat-Ratzon 1983, Adaki-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.

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:

1. The poet may have written the lyrics to an existing melody, i.e., adapted them to a melody he knew beforehand.
2. The poet could be the composer as well, i.e., he may have created the lyrics and melody as one entity.
3. Someone may have composed the melody after the poem was written and published. That melody has been accepted and used ever since.
4. 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 Shalom Shabazi) were also renowned as cantors or prayer leaders. They were known for their musical talents. 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. Generally, however, we can only guess the source of the melody. Except for a few cases, relatively from later periods, is there sufficient evidence pointing to one of the above suggestions.

Teaching Methods

Teaching the melodies is done orally. The children listen to the adults singing, and imitate them. The singing is learnt along with the dance.

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, 33). The rhythmic accompaniment to the singing and the dances was hand clapping and beating on household utensils. The Gentiles did play instruments. For the male singing, it was usually a common tin can, originally used for storage. 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.

Diwan melodies are generally divided into two major types. The first includes melodies of a recitative-declamatory nature, with a fluent 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 prominently, include HATANI MA MEOD YAKRA MENATO (34), YASHKEF ELOHIM (50) and MI NISHEKANI MINESHIKOT AHA VA (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 HET'I (66), AYIN VELEV (70), and ANI HAYOM MEOD HOSHEK (44)

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. 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. This fact is clearly manifest in the notated songs. Sometimes entire poems are sung to other, more popular tunes. In these cases, it is enough to indicate this next to the song's title. Everybody knows the melody. In other instances, the borrowing is only partial. Only some of the melodies are used for other poems,

or, in even more fascinating instances, the same melody appears with altered meter, rhythm and nature, while maintaining its distinct identity. All those occurrences are noted in our book in remarks at the side of the songs themselves.

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. This enables the singers to 'deploy' the lyrics over the music in a similar manner. 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. The others may join in only when they have recognized the song. The lead singer also determines the opening 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.

Several singing styles were prevalent in the central Yemenite regions of Kawkaban, Shakhadia and Makwait. In Manakha the Jews used to sing mainly as they did in San'a, but did adapt styles from other regions as well.

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

1. Repeated response: The solo singer sings a verse, and the group responds by the same verse.
2. Completing response: The solo singer sings the beginning of the verse, usually the first hemistich, the 'door.' The group responds by completing it, usually with the second hemistich, the 'bolt'.
3. 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. They may be divided into two subcategories: completely improvised, and relatively free.

Holiday Songs have no specific melodies. They borrow tunes from other poems. Thus, SEMACH DODI BEYOM PURIM (17) borrows the melody of LEVA VI YACHSHKA 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. One girdle song 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. They are 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. However, 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 LEFELAH HARIMON (24), since it is always used for singing that song. The Nashid is usually sung as a response song. The Nashid is not accompanied by drumming and is not used for dancing. It may be used as an introduction to dance, in the invitation game. 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 or three different melodies. The 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. 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 **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 serves 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. Sometimes another member of the group, who is accepted by everyone, 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 are panting from the effort, as well as 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. They have defined patterns. They are not real 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 in the entire Diwan singing. However, 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. 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 major 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. 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. 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 polyphony. 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).

This way of singing the Hallel is probably very ancient and well rooted in the Yemenite Jewish culture. It appears also in the singing of some 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.

The poetic meters of the Spanish Golden Age of Hebrew poetry are prevalent in Diwan songs. 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 SIHI (43), because the opening short vowel gets an off-beat (anacrusis) of 1/8, while the rest of the vowels get a 1/4. With regard to pronunciation, it should be noted that Yemenite Jews pronounce the short vowels correctly. They can still attain a musical value, albeit a short 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 hemistiches. Each hemistich is considered a complete unit. In songs with a repeated response, the complete hemistich is unusually the only one repeated. In completing response, the group may respond with a bolt to the solo door. 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 SEMAH 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, 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 the word: note ration, 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 ending of verses, on the last syllable of the one preceding it, nicely preparing for the closure, as in SHEVAH EL HAY (1) and RE'AH

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 for it, as in YOM EZKERA HET'I (66), AYIN VALEV (70), IM NIN'ALU (77), EHYE ASHER EHYE (38), SEMAH 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 TISMAH ME'OD NAFSHI (6), AHAVAT YOM SHABAT (7), AHAVAT DOD HEFTSI (10) and SHABAT MENUHA HI (12). Another closing formula is found in EL HAMEROMAM (41) at the end of each of 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 is 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 the 4th higher, as in AT BEIN 'ATSEI 'EDEN (23), SHEVAH EL HAY (1), ANI ESHAL SHEVAH HA 'EL (11), where the reciting notes are C-D and the driving notes are G-A.

Tonal Flexibility: Tonality, in its European sense, has no function in the group's singing, which is independent of any musical theory, and is 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 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.

DANCES OF THE DIWAN

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

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. Indeed, there is a discernible mutual influence between the male and female dances. However this research is only concerned with the male dances, which are a key component in the poetry-melody-dance interrelated entity.

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. The teaching of melodies and dances is achieved through the oral tradition, by observing, imitating, memorizing and experience.

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.

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 movement. Regarding the movement and dance only as a translation of the Diwan's poetic language would be highly superficial.

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 (steps direction and length). The choice of patterns, their nature and change timing, is made under the guidance of the leading dancer.

The step patterns are based on the constant and familiar practice. It is they who 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.

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

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 and 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 mnemotechnics for cantillation reading. Fathers and teachers still use these gestures in teaching the children to read the Bible. 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. Their stylistic influence on the improvised hand gestures in the dance is unmistakable.

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

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.

The real dance takes place during the Shira, which is the core of the event. There is no dancing during the Hallel. All present – singers, dancers and observers – engage in the singing of the Hallel blessing.

The circumstances, which imposed indoor dancing, and the living conditions of a single-sized room attended by many people, have generated a unique phenomenon of a chamber dance, dance in a room. In this manner a typical and specific dance style has evolved, rich of variants of movement combinations employing the vertical plane (Eshkol 1970, Galili 1987, Reuveni 1987).

The dance is directed by the most experienced dancer, usually the eldest. He 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 singers through eye contact. Coordination between dancers is also achieved through eye contact, along with hand signs: pressing of fingers, certain grasp, touching the hand, signs of direction, etc. This reliance on given patterns and on the freedom to choose from them, places a very important and crucial responsibility on the director. It calls for a quick response and high sensitivity of his part, as well as that of his partner.

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, 110).

For members of the community, the dance functions as an organizational-ceremonial-entertainment framework. It is also a vent for releasing accumulating pressures and a means of expressing of a sense of unity and belonging. Bear in mind that these dancers are not

professionals by any conventional standards, yet they are highly proficient.

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. 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. 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. They therefore were faced with the harsh dilemma of whether and how to maintain the community lifestyle and traditions brought over from Yemen in Israel. 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. It 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 advocates "to be Israelis" at any cost 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. This lends 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.

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.

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 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 clothing? A compromise was eventually worked out. Today dances are performed in ordinary modern clothes at weddings and other festivities. 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.

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. 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.

Modern Israeli lifestyle is reflected in the Yemenite dance mainly in the length of time. The songs and dances are cut shorter. Abridgement may also be attributed to the performers' sensitivity to the audience's response. The bigger the audience, the shorter its attention span. Menachem Arussi is extremely sensitive to audience response. Despite his ability and willingness to adapt himself to his viewers, he would never do without the basic structure of the dance (Nashid-Shira-Hallel). He makes the necessary shortcuts without altering the basic format.

Arussi and his friends' dances are very personal and are controlled by the leader. However, today there are more and more events where the guiding dancer is not as prominent. 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.

A 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. It is 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 Yemenite-Jewish dance elements in 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 Yemenite-Jewish 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 the 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 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 Yemenite-Jewish tradition have become a significant component of the Israeli folk song and dance scene.

The Space of the Dance

The circumstances, which imposed indoor dancing, and the living conditions of a single-sized room attended by many people, have generated a unique phenomenon of a chamber dance, dance in a room. In this manner a typical and specific dance style has evolved, rich of variants of movement combinations employing the vertical plane (Eshkol 1970, Galili 1987, Reuveni

1987).

Conclusion

It is just natural that in the framework of an article one cannot include all the details and the documentation of a twenty years research. This is to be found in our book. However, its main characteristics are as follows:

1. Interrelations of the entity poetry-music-dance as a basis of interdisciplinary research.
2. Documentation of a musical repertory of a certain community as it is today and the changes that occurred in it during several decades in the passage from Yemen to Israel.
3. The significance of the preservation of a poetry-music-dance tradition from the personal, social and cultural point of view.
4. Its importance and influence on Israeli art and culture.
5. The dominance of the Hebrew language as a common denominator between the Yemenite-Jewish Diwan tradition and the Israeli culture.

Discography

Listed here are only records which contain Diwan songs, as sung according to the Manakha tradition by Menachem Arussi and the Bnei Teman group, to whom this article is dedicated.

Additional recordings of this group are kept at the National Sound Archives affiliated to the Jewish Music Research Center at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and at Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv.

1. **The Jewish- Yemenite Diwan**, Unesco Collection, CD Auvidis D 8024, 1978/1990. Philips 6586 037, Holland, 1978. LP Recording and Editing: Naomi and Avner Bahat.
2. **With Songs They Respond** – The Diwan of the Hews from Central Yemen. Recording and Editing: Naomi and Avner Bahat. Anthology of Musical Traditions in Israel 19, Jewish Music Research Center, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2006.
3. **AHAVAT HADASA** (The Love of Hadassa), Beth Hatefutsoth Records BTR 9001, 1990, CD.

Recording and Editing: Naomi and Avner Bahat.

4. **AHUV LIBI** (My Beloved) Beth Hatefutsoth Records, BTR 9004, 1990, CD. Recording and Editing: Naomi and Avner Bahat.

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