

Yehiel Adaky – Fifty Years of Yemenite Singing

Yehiel Adaky (1903-1980) was born in the city of Menacha, central Yemen. From the age of three he was brought up in San'a, the capital and main center of Jewish life in the country, where his ancestors had lived. He received a complete Jewish education, studying with some of the city's most famous rabbis. His father died when he was nine and he was compelled to interrupt his studies and work for a living. In 1920, a year of severe famine, he fled from Yemen and for seven years wandered through Aden, Ethiopia and Egypt, finally settling in Jerusalem in 1927.

From early childhood he was recognized as a talented singer and musician and from the age of thirteen sang at the wedding celebrations of many Yemenite Jewish families. Settling in Eretz-Israel in 1927, he found the state of Yemenite-Jewish chanting there at very low ebb and decided to devote his life to its restoration, dissemination and teaching. He went to work in youth clubs, organizing choirs of boys and girls of Yemenite origin, teaching them their musical tradition and instilling in them a love of that tradition. From 1929 he lived in Tel-Aviv where he continued this activity.

When the radio service "Kol Yerushalayim" (Voice of Jerusalem) was established in 1936, he gave weekly broadcasts of Yemenite songs. In the thirties he cooperated with the musician and musicologist Menashe Ravina, an enthusiastic follower of the Yemenite tradition. He also taught Bracha Zefira some songs in those years. Besides teaching youth and singing, he composed some songs and made some of the earliest records of traditional Jewish-Yemenite songs.

After his death, in 1981, appeared his book **A Treasury of Jewish Yemenite Chants** which he wrote with Uri Sharvit, published by The Israeli Institute for Sacred Music in Jerusalem. The book is bilingual (Hebrew and English) and includes a rich choice of his collection.