

The Synagogue Journal

1856-2006

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HistoricalJournal@KaneStreet.org

Shabbat Vayishlach

Issue 49

Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

In this issue ...

Rabbi Israel Goldfarb served as the spiritual leader of this congregation for more than a third of its one hundred fifty years. Congregation Baith Israel engaged him to be their Hazzan in the summer of 1905 following their move to the Harrison Street Synagogue. Within a year, they renewed his contract as Hazzan, Rabbi and Principal of the Religious Schools. Rabbi Goldfarb's sensitive leadership guided the congregation through good times and bad: the merger of Congregation Baith Israel and Talmud Torah Anshei Emes, two World Wars, the crash and great Depression and the demographic shift away from the neighborhood.

The future leader was born December 15, 1879 in Sieniewa, Galicia, Poland, in the week following Shabbat Vayishlach. Once again, we turn to Genesis 32:25-33 and contemplate the ambiguous story of Jacob's nocturnal "wrestling match" with the mysterious, divine being. The Rabbis wonder about the identity of this nocturnal opponent: Was he Jacob's conscience? G-d? Jacob's long estranged brother, Esau? A being that signifies the past, present and future enemies of the people Israel? Jacob emerges victorious from this struggle and is renamed Israel, "For you have striven with the Divine and with man and have overcome." Jacob was able to persevere in this struggle only because of his two prior maturing decades, sojourning with Laban and building his family, estate, social standing, reputation and ethical sensitivity. From the Torah's standpoint, "winning at life" involves a prolonged commitment to children, spouse, family, faith and the future of one's people.

The name "Israel" was well chosen for Israel Goldfarb. Past issues of The Synagogue Journal document the synagogue during the Goldfarb era. This week we focus more on the man: Synagogue Leader, Religious School Principal, Musician, Professor and Community Leader. The photographs, biographies and writings are intended to convey a sense of his energy and style and the reasons he was so beloved. The congregation honored him at anniversary dinners four times: in 1915, 1940, 1944 and 1956. They placed a plaque in his memory in the Sanctuary lobby. Now, a new generation at Kane Street, striving to learn about his musical legacy, presented a concert and discussion in April 2005, "Israel Goldfarb and His Progeny: The Choral Tradition at Kane Street Synagogue," and symposium in March 2006, "Keeping the Faith in Brooklyn," with musicologists who spoke about the significance of the Goldfarb songsters and the character of his melodies.

During his fifty-four-years with the Congregation, Rabbi Goldfarb worked with seventeen presidents and four shamus'. He officiated at several thousand life cycle events, conferring blessings at Births, B'nai Mitzvah, Confirmations, marriages and funerals. May his memory be a blessing.

It has been a great privilege to work with the Goldfarb family. Many thanks to Joseph Goldfarb, Henry Michelman, Belle Goldfarb Lehrman, Sarah Simon Rubinow and Ned Alterman for materials and guidance. Excerpts from conversations with Joseph and Belle about their father and the synagogue appear in Journal archives: Issue 6 - Sacred Music, Issue 7 - Harrison Street Synagogue, Issue 20 - B'nai Mitzvah, Issue 36 - Children, Issue 37 - Shabbat, Issue 38 Rosh Hashanah, Issue 39 - Yom Kippur, Issue 40 - Sukkot and Simchat Torah, Issue 44 - Jews in America.

Carol Levin, Editor

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Contents ...

Portrait

This photograph from 1916 of Rabbi Goldfarb appeared in the Sixtieth Anniversary journal in addition to the Rabbi's history of the congregation. The publication included thirteen photographs of synagogue leaders.

A Biographical Sketch

A page from the 1940 dinner souvenir book provides the Rabbi's biography.

Your Children's Jewish Education

As Principal of the congregation's Religious Schools, Rabbi Goldfarb admonished Jewish Parents, "For the sake of the future happiness of your children, do your duty. Send them to Hebrew and Sunday School." This ad appeared in the 30th Anniversary Journal, January 30, 1938.

Goldfarb Publications

The Jewish Songster Publishing Company was located at 360 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, the Goldfarb residence. Rabbi Goldfarb's brother, Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb, occupied a floor of the brownstone. Samuel was the Head of the Music Department at the Bureau of Jewish Education and synagogue Choral Director. Thelma Goldfarb, the Goldfarb's eldest daughter, taught music at PS29 and the Sunday School. The company produced a variety of works by Israel, Samuel and Thelma. This article provides a book list and titles of music included in *The Jewish Songster*, *Synagogue Melodies for the High Holy Days* and *Song & Praise for Sabbath Eve*.

Centennial Message - 1956

Rabbi Goldfarb's message for the Centennial Banquet Journal concludes with, "'Chazack Ve'ematz! Be strong and of good courage!' And may our planting of today reward us with a rich harvest in the years to come!"

Centennial Fundraiser

In this photograph Rabbi Goldfarb, the honoree, poses with Centennial Chairman and synagogue benefactor Herman Belth, President Oscar Hertz and Sisterhood President Miriam Ilson. The Rabbi drew many families who had moved from Downtown Brooklyn to this benefit at the Waldorf Astoria.

In Memoriam

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America included this tribute in memory of Rabbi Goldfarb at Graduation Exercises June 4, 1967. Rabbi Goldfarb graduated from Solomon Schechter's first graduating class at JTS in 1902 and spoke at his memorial service.

Israel Goldfarb, Rabbi, Composer, 'Father of Congregational Singing' is Dead at 87

Credit: The New York Times, February 14, 1967

Rabbi Goldfarb died during a newspaper strike; few people saw this obituary.

<http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F20F1EFA3A58107B93C6A81789D85F438685F9>

The Journey of a Hebrew Melody: Rabbi Israel Goldfarb's Shalom Aleichem

This article by Rabbi Henry D. Michelman first appeared in *Rayonot*, a publication of Park Avenue Synagogue, New York.



Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

(A Biographical Sketch)

Rabbi Israel Goldfarb was born on December 15th, 1879 at Sieniawa, Austrian Poland. He is the son of Nathaniel David and Malye Goldfarb.

Rabbi Goldfarb came to America as a child, and received his elementary education in New York. In 1902 he was graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and from Columbia University.

At an early age he displayed an interest in Jewish music. He sang in Synagogue choirs and studied music from private teachers. Later he took music courses at the Institute of Musical Art and at Columbia University.

In 1901, when still a rabbinical student, he was called to the pulpit of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun of Staten Island. He served there as Rabbi and Cantor until 1905 when he was called to assume his present post at Baith Israel Anshei Emes.

In 1920, he was appointed instructor in Hazanut at the Jewish Theological Seminary, a position he still holds.

In addition to his Rabbinical duties, Rabbi Goldfarb was active in communal affairs. In 1903 he was instrumental in the organization of the Cantors' Association of the United States and Canada, and served as its president for two years. In 1905 he organized the Talmud Torah of Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes and in 1910 he called into being its Sisterhood.

He was active in the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary of which he was the treasurer for 10 years. He was the president of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers for 2 years and is now an honorary member of its Executive Board.

Among the other organizations in which the Rabbi is an active member are: The Brooklyn Jewish Ministers Association, The Y. M. H. A. of which he is a member of the Board of Directors, Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, the Joint Distribution Committee, The American Academy for Jewish Research, The Jewish Publication Society, The United Synagogue of America, etc., etc.

In addition to his communal activities, Rabbi Goldfarb made some notable contributions to the field of literature and particularly to that of Jewish music.

Among his publications which are widely used in Synagogues and Schools throughout the length and breadth of the Country are:

- (1) "Friday Evening Melodies".
- (2) "The Jewish Songster" (2 volumes).
- (3) "Synagogue Melodies" for the High Holy Days.
- (4) "Song & Praise" for Sabbath Eve (in collaboration with Dr. Israel Herbert Levinthal).
- (5) "The Jewish Lullaby" — a tractate published in "The Jewish Library", Series 3.
- (6) "The Child and the Synagogue" — a monogram in "Problems of the Jewish Ministry" published by the N. Y. Board of Jewish Ministers.
- (7) "The Oldest Synagogue in Brooklyn" — a historical sketch of Baith Israel Anshei Emes widely consulted by those interested in the beginnings of Brooklyn Jewry.
- (8) "Avodas Yisroel" — a sabbath morning service for Cantor, Choir and Congregation — in manuscript awaiting publication, and a mass of Synagogue music for mixed choirs yet unpublished.

Goldfarb Publications

The Jewish Songster Publishing Company, located at the Goldfarb residence at 360 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, published works by Rabbi Israel Goldfarb (IG), his brother Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb (SG), daughter Thelma Goldfarb (TG) and father Nathaniel David Goldfarb (ND). The Rabbi instructed Hazanuth at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Hebrew Union College. Samuel Goldfarb, Head of the Music Department at the Bureau of Jewish Education, led the synagogue's choir. Thelma Goldfarb taught music at PS29 and the Sunday school. The lists of music that follow the booklist below note Goldfarb compositions, arrangements and adaptations.

***The Jewish Songster* – 1918**

The Jewish Songster Publishing Company advertised this book in later editions as the “Standard Song Book in the Jewish religious schools of hundreds of congregations.”

***Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve* - 1920**

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal

“Contains 8 service, Z'miros, Hymns and liturgic songs – 120 pages of Hebrew and English Texts and Music for use at Synagogue gatherings, in connection with the late Friday evening sermon or discourse”

***The Jewish Songster* - 1925**

Music for Voice and Piano

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb

“Vol. 1 – Contains 120 choice festival songs in Hebrew, English and Yiddish, arranged for voice and piano.

Religious Schools of Congregation Beth Israel Anshe Emes”

***The Jewish Songster* - 1929**

Music for Voice and Piano

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb

“Vol. II – Contains 113 choice Palestinian and general songs in Hebrew, English and Yiddish.”

A Pocket Songster

“A collection of 35 popular songs in Hebrew, Yiddish and English for Rallies, community “Sings” and festive gathering. Handy Pocket Size”

Friday Evening Melodies

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb

“A complete Friday Evening Service. Arranged in two voices for children's choirs, with piano or organ accompaniment. Can also be used by adult choirs. Original melodies, simple, traditional and inspiring. Contains also Z'imiros and Grace after Meals”

***Avodath Yisro-El* - 1946**

Sabbath Morning Service for Cantor, Congregation and Choir

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

“A complete service consisting of 126 musical selections of cantorial recitatives, congregational chants, and choral selections arranged for 2, 3 and 4 voices”

***Synagogue Melodies For the High Holy Days* - 1926**

Arranged for Congregational Singing

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb

The Jewish Lullaby

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

A tractate published in “The Jewish Library”, Series 3

The Child and the Synagogue

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

A monogram in “Problems of the Jewish Ministry” published by the N.Y. Board of Jewish Ministers

The Oldest Synagogue in Brooklyn

By Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

A historical sketch of Baith Israel Anshei Emes widely consulted by those interested in the beginnings of Brooklyn Jewry.

Echoes of Palestine

By Thelma Goldfarb

“A collection of fifty choice and stirring Palestinian songs arranged for Voice and Piano”

The Jews in Egypt

“A New Pesach Operetta”

By Samuel S. Grossman and Samuel E Goldfarb

THE JEWISH SONGSTER

CONTENTS - PART I

FESTIVAL SONGS

CHANUKOH

B'rochos shel Chanukoh (IG & SG)
Hanneros Hal-lo-lu (IG & SG)
Mo-oz Tsur
Rock of Ages
Hear the Voice of Israel's Elders (SG)
Our Heros
Hail the Maccabees (IG & SG)
My Salvation Tower
Ho-yo, Ho-yoh Melech (arr.SG)
Chanukoh (arr.SG)
D'me Chanukoh (SG)
Ba-cha-nu-koh (arr.SG)
Chanukioh Y'feh-fi-yoh
M'asi-yoh
Chanukoh, Hoy Chanukoh (Hebrew)
Chanukoh, Oy Chanukoh (Yiddish)
Oy Ihr Kleine Lich-te-lech

CHAMISHOH O-SOR

The Trees of Home (SG)
Palestine Spring Song (SG)
Marching Song of the Judeans (SG)
A Home in Palestine
B'rosh Hash-sho-noh (arr.SG)
Rosh Hash-sho-noh Lo-i-lo-nos (arr.SG)
Sh'ke-di-yoh (arr.SG)
Hak-Ku-Kl-yoh (arr.SG)
Ze-mer L'cha-mi-shoh Osor Bi-sh'vot
Ach B'e-rets Yis-ro-el (arr.SG)
El Ha-sodeh (arr.SG)
Shir Helech (arr.SG)
La-cha-mi-shoh Osor Bi-sh'vot
Kinder, Kumt der Frih-ling Ruft

PURIM

Shoshannas Ya-akov (arr.SG)
Good Purim
Thanksgiving and Praises
Ha-la-lu-yah
A Wicked, Wicked Man (arr.SG)
Chag Purim (arr.SG)
Purim Hayom
Yom Purim – Yom Chag Hu Lonu (arr.SG)
Mai Purim (arr.SG)
Mis'chak Purim
Zeh Ha-yom Yom Purim
A Purim Lied

PESACH

Kiddush (IG & SG)
Mah Nish-tan-noh (adpt.SG)
Ki Lo Noeh (arr.SG)
Addir Hu
Praise the Lord
God of Might
Chad Gadyoh
Yom L'ya-bo-shoh (arr.SG)
Song of Victory
Children of Israel, On! (arr.SG)
Ma-aseh Vigdi (arr.SG)

LAG B'OMER

Palestine Scout Song (arr.SG)
Oh Strengthen (SG)
Palestine, My Palestine (IG & SG)
Bar Kochba (SG)
Hayom Lag B'o-mer (arr.SG)
M'kom Som Arozim (arr.SG)
Bohor, Bagay
Chushu Achim, Chushu! (arr.SG)
S'u Nes Tsiyonoh (arr.SG)
Birkas Om
U-roh Yis-ro-el (arr.SG)

SH'VUOS

"Entreat Me Not to Leave Thee"
Confirmation Hymn
Once on Sinai (SG)
With Sacred Joy (arr.SG)
Avodas Ho-i-kor
Sho-vu-os (arr.SG)
Shir Hak-ko-tsir
Dos Lied fun Broit
Unter die Greeninke Boimelach (IG & SG)
Der Oibersh-ter Iz der Me-chutten

SUCCOS

Hoshano (IG & SG)
Ha-ko-fos (arr.SG)
Ogil V'es-mach
His-kab'tsu Mal'-o-chim (IG & SG)
Song for Simchas Torah
Lom-moh Succoh Zu? (arr.SG)
Zemer L'Succos
Or'chim Le-chog (arr.SG)
B'mach-rash-ti (arr.SG)
Vos is do in Kestele?
Simchas Torah
Simchas Toi-reh

SABBATH

L'cho Dodi (IG & SG)
Bor'chu (IG & SG)
Bo-ruch Hu
Sh'ma (IG & SG)
Mi-chomo-choh (IG & SG)
V'shom'ru (IG & SG)
Vay-chullu (IG & SG)
Mogen Ovov (IG & SG)
O-le-nu (arr.SG)
Ve-anach'nu
Ve-he-yoh Adonoy (IG & SG)
Adon Olom I (IG & SG)
Adon Olom II (IG & SG)
Yigdal (arr.IG & SG)
Sholem Alechem (IG & SG)
Kidduch L'Lel Shabbos (IG)
Yoh Ribon (IG & SG)
Tsur Mishel-lo (SG)
Shir Ham-ma-alos
Birkas Hamozon (arr.SG)
Come, O, Sabbath Day
Sho-chen Ad
El Odon
En Ko-mo-cho (IG & SG)
Av Ho-re-cha-min (IG & SG)
Ki Mits-tsi-yon

Sh'ma Yis'ro-el
 L'cho A-do-noy Hag-g'dul-loh
SABBATH (cont'd)
 Ho-do Al E-rets
 Miz'-mor L'Dovid (**arr.SG**)
 Ets Cha-yim
 K'du-sha (Musaf)
 Yis-m'chu
 Kad-d'she-nu (**arr.SG**)
 Sim Sholom
 En Ke-lo-he-nu
PATRIOTIC
 Hatik-voh
 America
 The Star-Spangled Banner

CONTENTS – PART II

HEBREW SECULAR SONGS

Am Yis-ro-el Chai
 Ho-voh No-gi-loh (**TG**)
 Boker (**TG**)
 Sh'mor
 Yiboneh Hamik'-dosh
 Amcho Yi-ro-el Yib-bo-neh (**TG**)
 Na-aleh L'ar-tsei-nu
 Niggun Bialik
 Hin-neh Mah Tov
 Tov Lich'-yos
 Kodimoh
 Im Ein Ani Li
 Da-yei-nu
 Ochinu Ya-akov
 Shi-ru No
 Shir Haggolil
 Mi Yiv'-neh Haggolil
 Eil Yiv'-neh Haggolil
 Yaldoh Yaldosi
 u-ru His-o-r'ru
 O-lei Regel (**arr.SG**)
 Nes Tsi-yo-noh (**arr.SG**)
 Heidod, Heidod!
 Sholom Aleichem Y'hu-di (**SG**)
 Po B'e-rets
 Shir Avodoh
 Bein N'har P'ros
 Bikurim (**arr.SG**)
 Hayarden
 Ani Ma-amin
 Y'ru-sho-loyim
 Im Esh-ko-cheich (Tsiyon Tamosi)
 H-sho-shannoh
 Tik'vas Yis-ro-el
 Atoh Hu Ha-yo-dei-a (**arr.TG**)
 Mach'-tso-voh (**arr.TG**)
 Lam-tsi-di-ri-tsa
 Ha-;lu-yoh (K'ru-im Onu)
 Shir Ha-cha-lu-tsim
 Yi'l'las Tanim
 Pa-am Achas (**arr.TG**)
 Choluts, Choluts Hin-nei-ni (**arr.TG**)
 Y'feo Fo-yoh
 Zemer L'shabos
 Shabos Hamalkoh (**arr.SG**)
 Oneg Shabos
 Zemer L'mo-tso-ei Shabos

CHILDREN'S SONGS

Degel

Achas Sh'ta-yim (**arr.SG**)
 Ivrim Anach-nu
 Ha-pa-amon M'tsal-tseil
 Has! Hash-she-mesh Go-va Dom
 Nitshu Ts'lolim
 Nu-mi Nu-mi
 Ho-eim (**SG**)
 Shom Bo-o-chu (**SG**)
 El Hash-sho-ar
 S'vi-von (**arr.SG**)
 Lu Ho-yi-si
 Zemer L'vein Haz-z'man-nim
 Shir Ho-ro-eh (**arr.SG**)
 Al hehorim Bi-y'hu-doh
 Ha-yom Log B'omer
 Kash-tei-nu Al Shich-mei-nu (**arr.SG**)
 Kabolash Hatoroh (**arr.SG**)

SACRED SONGS

Kol Dodi (**arr.SG**)
 Al Tif-g'i Vi L'oz'-veich
 M'nuchoh V'simchoh (**SG**)
 Mah Y'didus (**arr.IG & SG**)
 Yom Zeh L'yis-ro-el (**arr.NG & SG**)
 Yom Zeh M'chubod (**arr.IG & SG**)
 Bo-ruch Elohei-nu
 Atoh Echod
 Askinu S'u-do-so
 Eili-yo-hu Hanovi
 Omar Adonoy L'y-akov (**arr.IG & SG**)

YIDDISH FOLK SONGS

L'chayim Rebbe
 Unser Rebbenu
 Oy der Rebbenu
 Sha! Shtill!
 Az der Rebbe Elimelech
 Hal'vay
 Bal Agolohg Lied
 Die Alte Kashe
 Ober Yiden Zeinen Mir
 Vus vet zein az Mo-shi-ach vet Kommen
 Ach Tsiyon, Tsiyon
 Zamd uri Shteren
 Gekommen iz die Tseit
 Oifn Pripitchik
 Die Mezinke Ois-gegeben
 Shluf mein Kind
 Der Pastechel
 Yismach Mosheh
 Gevald-zshe Alle Yidelech
 Bulbe

ENGLISH SONGS

Onward
 Longing for Jerusalem (**SG**)
 The Restoration of Israel (**SG**)
 A Song of Zion (**SG**)
 Song of the Wanderer (**SG**)
 The Land of Our Father's Delight
 Yemenite Song
 Homeless (**IG & SG**)
 At the Dawn I Seek Thee (**IG & SG**)
 Father to Thee We Look
 God is in His Holy Temple
 God, I will Extol Thee Now (**SG**)
 Let There be Light (**SG**)
 My Tree (**SG**)
 In Shu-Shan Long Ago

SYNAGOGUE MELODIES FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

ROSH HASHONOH EVENING SERVICE

Bor'chu
Responses
Sh'ma Yisroel
Boruch Shem
Mi Chomochoh
Adonoy Yimloch
Tik'u (For Rosh Hashonoh)
Ki Vay-yom Haz-zeh (For Yom Kippur) **(IG)**
Kaddish Responses I
Kaddish Responses II (After Amidah)
Va-anachunu Kor'im
V'hoyoh **(IG)**
Yidgal

ROSH HASHONOH MORNING SERVICE

Kaddish III
Bor'chu
Kodosh
Boruch K'vod
Sh'ma Yisroel
Boruch Shem
Mi Chomochoh
Adonoy Yimloch
Zoch'renu L'chayim
Mi Chomocho, Av Horachmim
Yimloch Ado-noy
V'at-toh Kodosh
L'el Orech Din **(Adapted by IG)**
Kodosh (K'dushoh)
Boruch K'vod
Yimloch
Boruch Hu
Omen
Modim **(IG)**
Uch'sov
Birkas Kohanim
B'sefer Chay-yim
Kaddish Responses II
En Komocho **(IG)**
Av Horachamin **(IG)**
Ki Mits-tsi-yon
Boruch Shenosan
Adonoy, Adonoy **(IG)**
Va-ani Sfillosi **(SG)**
Sh'ma Yisroel
Echod Elohenu
L'cho Adonoy Haggdulloh

ROSH HASHONOH MUSAF SERVICE

V'zos Hatoroh
Ash're Yoshve **(IG)**
Va-anachnu N'vorech Yoh **(IG)**
Hod Al Erets
Su Sh'orim
Kohanecho
Kaddish IV
Zoch'renu **(IG)**
Mi Chomocho, Av Horachamin **(IG)**
Yim'loch Adonoy **(IG)**
V'at-toh Kodosh **(IG)**
Melech Elyon **(IG)**
La'-ade Ad Yimloch
B'rosh Hashshonoh
V'attoh Hu Melech **(IG)**
Kodosh (K'dushoh)

Boruch K'vod
Sh'ma Yisroel
Ani Adonoy
Yim'loch
V'chol Ma-aminim
Response during Amidah (**adapted by IG**)
Olenu (**adapted by IG**)
Areshes S'fosenu
Modim
Uch'sov (**IG**)
Birkas Kohanim
B'sefer Chayyim (**IG**)
Hayom T'amtsey (**IG**)
Kaddish Responses II
En Kelohenu
Va-anachnu Kor'im
V'hoyoh
Adon Olom

KOL NIDRE SERVICE

V'nislach (**IG**)
Vayomer Adonoy (**IG**)
Maariv Service
Ki Hinneh Kachomer (**IG**)
Ki Onu Amecho
Oshamnu (**arr. IG**)
V'al Kullom

YOM KIPPUR MORNING SERVICE

Ki Onu Amecho
Oshamnu
V'al Kullom

YOM KIPPUR MUSAF SERVICE


Boruch Shem
V'chach Hoyoh Moneh (**IG**)
K'chel Han-nimtach (**IG & SG**)
Ki Onu Amecho
Oshmamnu (**arr. IG**)
Val Kullom
Responses during Amidah
Kaddish Responses II

NILOH SERVICE

Ashre
Va-anachnu N'vorech Yoh
Kaddish N'iloh (**arr.IG**)
Zoch'renu
Mi-chomocho. Av Horachamim
Yim'loch
V'attoh Kodosh
K'dushoh
Ki Onu Amecho
Oshamnu
Responses during Amidah
Kaddish Responses II
At the dawn I seek thee (**IG**)
O Let our Prayer Ascend

SONG & PRAISE FOR SABBATH EVE

Sh'ma Yisroel
Hear, O, Israel
Sholom Alechem **(IG)**
Tsur Mishello **(SG)**
Yis-m'chu
Hear the Voice of Israel's Elders
M'nuchoh V'simchoh **(SG)**
Vay'chullu **(IG)**
Yoh Ribon Olom **(IG)**
Mogen Ovos **(IG)**
Children of Israel, On!
Yom Zeh L'yisroel **(NG)**
V'shom'ru (IG & SG)
Come O' Sabbath Day
Shir Ham-Ma-Alos
Esso Einay El Hehorim
Mo-oz Tsur
The Trees of Home **(SG)**
Va-anach'nu
V'ho-yoh Ado-noy **(IG)**
Yidgal
Adon Olom



RABBI'S MESSAGE



RABBI ISRAEL GOLDFARB

On this Centennial Celebration I am happy to greet our members and friends who have stood by our Congregation through these many decades of trial and error, of struggle and experimentation.

We had our moments of despair and disappointment. But we also had our moments of triumph and victory.

We faced many a challenge and fought many a battle in our efforts to preserve the sacred heritage of our faith bequeathed to us by our fathers.

We are now facing a new century, a new era and a new opportunity. A better, brighter and a more promising future is now beckoning to us. May we be equal to the task. With a new dedication and a renewed spirit may we apply ourselves to the great challenge that lies ahead: — to make B. I. A. E. a better instrument for the advancement of our Faith which gave us so much comfort and the power of endurance in the troubled times of the past.

Personally, I am grateful for the cooperation and encouragement you have given me in the 50 long years of my humble ministration in your midst. Your friendship and good will, your high regard for me and your loyalty to our cause provided me with the spiritual fuel that propelled and steered me in my efforts to serve our Synagogue, our G-d and our people.

Chazack Ve'ematz! "Be strong and of good courage!" And may our planting of today reward us with a rich harvest in the years to come!

IN. MEMORIAM

Israel Goldfarb

At these Exercises, we pause for a moment to mourn the recent passing of Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, an alumnus of this Seminary in the class of 1902 and rabbi for fifty-four years of Brooklyn's mother synagogue Baith Israel Anshei Emes until his retirement in 1959. Rabbi Goldfarb taught *hazzanut* at the Seminary for twenty-two years and devoted much of his effort to bringing about a reawakening of appreciation of Jewish liturgical music. He wrote ten volumes of music for the synagogue, the religious school and the home, and his melody for "Shalom Aleichem" is so well known and so widely sung that it is one of the few pieces of modern Jewish creativity that has already become a classic. So much of the music that is sung in American congregations is of his authorship that he was rightfully designated the "Father of Congregational Singing." The quality of his personality and the nature of his achievements gained the approbation of his colleagues who elected him to the presidency of the New York Board of Rabbis and of this Seminary which conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters, *honoris causa*, in 1949. He was an ornament to the rabbinate. May his memory be a blessing.

זכרונו לברכה

ISRAEL GOLDFARB, RABBI, COMPOSER

**'Father of Congregational
Singing' Is Dead at 87**

Special to The New York Times

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, L.I., Feb. 13 — Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, known as the father of congregational singing in synagogues, died today in the South Nassau Communities Hospital in Oceanside. He was 87 years old and lived at 200 North Village Avenue.

Rabbi Goldfarb was the author of 10 volumes of music for the synagogue, the religious school and the home. Some of his songs were used by the Army and Navy Hymnal and in collections of songs for schools.

One of his most popular hymns was "Sholom Aleichem," an ode to the Angel of Peace, who, according to tradition, visits Jewish homes Friday nights at the approach of the Sabbath.

In 1959, he was named rabbi emeritus of Congregation Bait Israel Anshei Emes at Kane and Court Streets, Brooklyn's "mother synagogue," which was founded in 1855. He became spiritual leader of the congregation in 1905.

Rabbi Goldfarb was born in Poland and was brought to the United States in 1892. He was graduated from Columbia University and, in 1902, from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

From 1920 to 1942, he served as professor of Jewish liturgical music at the seminary. In 1949, it conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters. In the same year, he was a founder of the School of Sacred Music of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.



Rabbi Israel Goldfarb

He was a former president of the New York Board of Rabbis.

In 1961 Rabbi Goldfarb was honored at a concert of his compositions at Temple B'nai Shalom here.

Surviving are his widow, the former Frieda Kessler; a son, Joseph S.; four daughters, Mrs. Selma Rubinow, Mrs. Hannah Michelman, Mrs. Leah Alterman and Mrs. Bella Lehrman, wife of Rabbi Irving Lehrman of Temple Emanu-El in Miami Beach; four brothers, Albert, Samuel, Saul and Benjamin; two sisters, Mrs. Dorothy Rhine and Mrs. Belle Spero; eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held at 1 P.M. tomorrow at Congregation Bait Israel Anshei Emes.

The Journey of a Hebrew Melody: Rabbi Israel Goldfarb's Shalom Aleichem

Rabbi Henry D. Michelman

"As songs were your statutes to me wherever I wandered."

PSALM 119:15

This is the story of a Hebrew melody for the Friday night hymn *Shalom Aleichem* sung in the home, welcoming the angels who, according to the Talmud (Shabbat 119b), accompany the head of the household home from the synagogue. For centuries the hymn itself was recited or chanted and added a dimension of formality and elegance to the Sabbath evening observance.

This melody was composed by my grandfather, Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, on a Friday afternoon in May of 1918 as he sat on the steps of his *alma mater*, Columbia University. Within a few years, it was known and sung throughout the Jewish world. The melody is known, but often not the composer. How did it proliferate?

FROM TABLE TO TABLE

Within weeks of bringing it home to share with his family and guests at the Friday evening Sabbath table, the melody began to "travel" into the homes of the extended Goldfarb family: Israel Goldfarb had five brothers and five sisters—all musical and all enamored of singing.

My uncle Joseph, Rabbi Goldfarb's son, recalls asking his father what other melody for *Shalom Aleichem* had been used previously in America or in Europe. Rabbi Goldfarb answered that, as far as he knew, there had been no

Rabbi Henry D. Michelman succeeded his grandfather as Rabbi of the Kane Street Synagogue. He then served as Assistant to the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary and later was Executive Vice-President of The Synagogue Council of America. Now a composer, he has scored films for A&E, PBS, CNBC, and ABC. His current commitments include works for synagogues and churches.

melody for *Shalom Aleichem*. Previously, it had been "half chanted" or "only recited" by the men returning home from *shul*.

I asked Cantor Jacob Lefkowitz, the father of our Cantor David Lefkowitz, how his own father had rendered *Shalom Aleichem* upon returning to his home after *shul* on Friday nights. He recalled his father chanting it, rather than singing a formal melody. Yet, David Lefkowitz sang for me a "snappy tune" to *Shalom Aleichem* composed by his grandfather Yitzhak Yehuda. It was quite beautiful. Still, it is the Goldfarb melody that became universally known and is sung to this day.

Friday at my grandfather's country home was devoted to preparing for *Shabbat*. My grandmother presided over a large bustling kitchen and the massive Sabbath table was set in the large dining room. Late in the afternoon Grandfather bathed and dressed in white to receive his guests. In a few hours there would be as many as twenty people around that table—welcoming *Shabbat* in four-part harmony: *Shalom Aleichem*, *Eishet Chayil*, *Kol M'kadesh*, *Birchat Hamazon*, and so many *z'mirot*. No synagogue could boast a better "choir" for singing the Sabbath hymns composed or arranged by my grandfather.

The three Sabbath meals, from Friday night to late Saturday afternoon, were also grand concerts—*lich'vod haShabbat*. It was at this table in Highmount, New York, and at the Goldfarb Clinton Street table in downtown Brooklyn that for almost half a century family and guests imbibed with their *kiddush* wine Goldfarb melodies, which then graced their own Sabbath tables, and eventually those of thousands of others.

Jacob Lefkowitz recalls that as a young man studying at the Yeshiva Torah V'Daas in Brooklyn he was a regular *Shabbat* guest in the home of Nathaniel David, the father of Israel Goldfarb. "Nossonl Dovid" himself was a wonderful melody-maker. At his table Jacob Lefkowitz heard the *Shalom Aleichem* and many other melodies for the *Shabbat z'mirot*, which he carried with him to the Young Israel of Cleveland. He told me that the music traveled from Cleveland to Chicago to Denver within the Young Israel movement certainly, as it simultaneously entered the larger congregational world. Rabbi David Lincoln learned the Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem* at the *Shabbat* table of his father, Ashe Lincoln, in London, and he recalls his grandfather Reuben singing it too. Rabbi Lincoln told me that in the course of his extensive travels around the world, the one melody he could count on hearing and, indeed, singing at any *Shabbat* table was the Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem*.

Indeed, the Goldfarbs and their friends helped to strengthen the then fledgling Young Israel movement's commitment to congregational singing, a practice not popular in the 19th century or in the early part of the 20th century.

FROM CONGREGATION TO CONGREGATION

Baith Israel Anshei Emes, "the Kane Street *shul*," was founded in 1856 by European immigrants who debarked on Brooklyn's South Shore and settled in Red Hook and Gowanus, known today as the very fashionable Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, and Carroll Gardens. It is still a thriving and growing congregation. Israel Goldfarb was ordained in 1902 by Solomon Schechter at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. From 1904 to 1956 he served as rabbi and cantor and introduced his music as he composed it for liturgical services—Sabbath, festivals and High Holy Days. So many of his melodies have become such standard parts of our liturgical services that they are considered "traditional;" he has been called "the father of congregational singing in America," and the Goldfarb family has often been referred to as "the first family of American synagogue music." His congregation was called the "mother synagogue of Brooklyn" because generations of members went forth from Kane Street to create congregations like Union Temple, the East Midwood Jewish Center, the Flatbush Jewish Center, and other Jewish communities in Brooklyn. They brought with them the Goldfarb music and the traditions of congregational singing. Rabbi Goldfarb brought his congregation into the Conservative movement, and it became one of the founding members of the United Synagogue of America.

The Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem* melody was first published in *Friday Evening Melodies* (1918), *The Jewish Songster* (1919), and *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve* (1920). Tens of thousands of these books were used in synagogues and schools throughout the country. They contained melodic songs, which were easy to sing and appealed to a new generation of American Jews. Here is how one was described in the publisher's catalogue:

"Kol Teruat Israel, by Israel Goldfarb: a New and Original Rosh Hashanah Evening Service. Arranged in four parts, based on traditional motives, retaining the stirring spirit of the 'days of awe,' modern in its musical arrangement, melodic and easy to learn and sing."

"BACK TO MOUNT SINAI"

The *Shalom Aleichem* melody traveled in three different directions. First, it "journeyed" back to "Mount Sinai," as it were: it became so universally sung that Jews in the United States were sure their grandparents and great-grand-

parents brought the melody to this country from ancient and distant places. Though it was copyrighted and recorded at the Library of Congress in 1918, many publishers—some in Israel—not knowing the origin of the melody, simply wrote “traditional” or “Hassidic.”

Almost fifty years ago Rabbi Morris Kertzer wrote that while visiting in India he heard an Indian Jew singing the Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem*. When he asked him where he had learned that melody, the Indian Jew told him that it “came down by tradition from his ancestors.” Family members traveling to Rhodesia, Palestine, and other distant places heard our grandfather’s *Shalom Aleichem* and brought back similar reports.

Goldfarb wrote that this music was printed for the first time in his *Friday Evening Melodies*, which was published in 1918: “The popularity of the melody,” he said, “traveled not only throughout this country but throughout the world, so that many came to believe that the song was handed down from Mount Sinai by Moses.”

Cantor Pinchas Spiro of Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Des Moines, writes: “The terms ‘traditional’ and ‘folk-song’ are frequently abused in musical anthologies and song collections. In a great many instances the use of these terms merely indicates that the names of the composers were unknown to the compiler or editor. A classic case in point is Rabbi Israel Goldfarb’s *Shalom Aleichem* [sic], which most song collections list as ‘traditional.’

“During the years 1961–1966 I served as cantor of Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles,” notes Spiro. “I was fortunate to study with the great Max Helfman. One day during 1963 he showed me his *Sabbath Chants and Zmirot*, a collection he had compiled and harmonized for Brandeis Camp Institute of Santa Susanna. I was surprised to see Goldfarb’s *Shalom Aleichem* described there as a ‘melody of Hassidic origin.’ I told him I was fairly certain that the composer was Israel Goldfarb. Max Helfman challenged me to prove it. And that prompted my letter of inquiry to Rabbi Goldfarb. I have a hand-written letter from Rabbi Goldfarb in which he tells in great detail how and when he composed that melody. It is dated May 10, 1963. Unfortunately, I never had a chance to show it to Max Helfman. He died rather suddenly on August 9, 1963.”

GARCIA MEETS GOLDFARB

In the secular music world, the Goldfarb melody currently enjoys a popular reception, although without appropriate attribution. Instrumental versions of

the Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem* are popping up all over the place. For instance, Andy Statman and David Grisman popularized it in their album *Songs of Our Fathers*; the melody was played last year at the memorial service for Jerry Garcia, the founder of the rock group The Grateful Dead; the Argentinean guitarist Enrique Coria has included it in his repertoire, though he is unaware of its Jewish liturgical roots, or that it was composed and published long ago.

Perhaps the oddest or the most unlikely recording of the Goldfarb *Shalom Aleichem* is the one by the Celtic guitarist Tony McManus, who plays it on his album of predominantly Celtic music, *Ceol More*. His instrumental version is richly harmonized with overdubs of mandolin, guitar and string bass. Not too long ago Itzhak Perlman recorded *Shalom Aleichem* on his album *At the Fiddler's House*. He, too, was apparently not aware of its origin. And, as in the above cases, the Goldfarb melody was simply called "traditional."

It is hard to believe that there was a time when congregational singing, as we know it today, was not popular nor was it accepted in many traditional synagogues. In the past in Europe, composers of synagogue music wrote for choir and organ; Jews "*davened*"—chanted and improvised on traditional *niggunim* or musical motives from Hassidic and, sometimes, secular sources. But, as a congregation in its collectivity, they basically did not sing as we do today.

Hazzanim did not (or dared not, as we shall see) create and introduce melodies into the liturgical service for congregants to learn and then to sing regularly. Macy Nulman (in his *Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music*) reports that, as a *bazzan* at a large Brooklyn congregation years ago, he attempted to introduce congregational singing into the service, and subsequently was called to a board meeting. The chairman, speaking for the board, scolded him: "We pay you a salary, and you ask us to help in the singing?" Contrast this with Goldfarb's congregation, where by 1907 there was a choir of professionals and lay members helping to lead congregants in song.

The Young Israel Movement is often credited with initiating congregational singing during the synagogue service as a means of overcoming "passive listening." Mr. Nulman tells us that "the musical service of Young Israel became known as 'Young Israel *nusach*.' A person who included these tunes as he led the (otherwise traditional) service in a synagogue other than Young Israel was sometimes reprimanded with 'Do you want to make this *shul* into a Young Israel—a church?'"

Still, melodies that people enjoyed singing flowed into Young Israel and flowed out, and the Goldfarb family had a lot to do with this process. As early as 1919 and throughout the 1920's, after conducting services in his synagogue and presiding over his own Shabbat table, Israel Goldfarb often walked over the

Brooklyn Bridge on Friday nights to the Oneg Shabbat at the newly formed Young Israel, housed in the Educational Alliance building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He brought with him his melodies. And then he walked back to Brooklyn, so that on Shabbat morning he would be back in his own *shul*. His brothers—Joseph, Saul, Benjamin, and Samuel—also were very active in the Young Israel movement in those early years. They, too, were extremely musical and served often as lay cantors in synagogues, where they infused Young Israel and other congregations with the kinds of melody-making and singing that were to become models for subsequent generations. Goldfarb first cousins—the Speros, the Hoenigs, the Rhines—legendary families in the Young Israel Movement, also were musical and accomplished singers who loved to sing Hebrew songs. Goldfarb family seniors tell of regular musical gatherings Saturday nights after *Havdalah* where cousins came together to make Jewish music.

Evelyn Mehlman in her article “A Tradition That Grew in Brooklyn,” (*Pioneer Women*, May-June, 1970) writes: “In 1907 choral music was introduced into Rabbi Goldfarb’s synagogue with Meyer Machtenberg, the well-known synagogue choral conductor, leading the choir until 1909. Machtenberg told this writer that Rabbi Goldfarb was familiar with the difficulties posed by the choirs of the day, and he was equally aware of the increased demands made by the new school of professionally trained musicians writing music. While he favored choral music, as a conservative rabbi-hazzan, he felt also very strongly about the desirability of added congregational participation in the services from the musical and devotional point of view. He said it was extremely important to compose simple melodic songs that untrained congregational members could learn easily and quickly and enjoy singing as part of the services and at home.”

My Uncle Joseph, who sang for many years in his father’s synagogue choir of mixed voices (in those days!), confirms this, adding that Rabbi Goldfarb was formally trained in music, having studied at Columbia University with one of its foremost musicologists and at The Institute of Musical Arts, which became The Juilliard School. Before coming to Kane Street, Rabbi Goldfarb conducted the choirs for major cantors in the Lower East Side synagogues. Years later he was appointed instructor of *hazzanut* in the Rabbinical School and in the Teachers Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he taught for decades.

Israel Goldfarb was born in Sieniewa (Shinyeva), Galicia, Poland, in 1879, the oldest son and second of a family of eleven children. He came to the United States at the age of 14. In Evelyn Mehlman’s article, his son Joseph offers this reflection on his father’s music, especially the *Shalom Aleichem* melody: “Since the transmigration of a melody is often strange and mysterious, perhaps the *Shalom Aleichem* is a memorial, in its own way, to the

memory of Sieniewa where Israel Goldfarb first acquired his love for Judaism and music; for the melody through Israel Goldfarb keeps alive the name of the little village of Sieniewa, a village that was completely exterminated by the Nazis and no longer exists." ■

was liberal enough to grant such permission. Some were generous enough to acknowledge the authorship. I read many publishers' notes in Israel, not knowing the origin of the melody, simply wrote "Tradition" or "Hasidic." But the fact remains that I am the composer, and the melody has been copyrighted by me and recorded at the Library of Congress in 1978.

I want to thank you in writing for your order to publish mine and for all the many claims to the authorship.

With all good wishes in your sacred work, believe me to be
very sincerely yours

Israel Goldfarb

Rabbi Pinchas Spiro,
Hayyan Temple Beth Am
Los Angeles, Calif

P.S. Rabbi Morris Kertov wrote in his book that while visiting in India he heard an Indian Jew singing, Shalom Aleichem. When he asked the Jew where he learned that melody, the Indian Jew told him that it came down by tradition from his ancestors. This much proves that the strains of this melody truly express the soul of the Jew in the Home Sabbath spirit.

Rabbi Israel Goldfarb's letter describing how his melody for "Shalom Aleichem" made its way to India.