



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Music, handmaiden of religion, 1955.

1) Religion which is itself the supreme and most difficult art of mankind has employed through the ages all the other arts to assist it in conveying its message.

It called to its aid painting, sculpture, architecture, drama and the dance, and of course music. Most especially music!

Music was not only an aid to worship, but a very vehicle of worship - almost as stirring and exalted as the spoken word. Music can speak without words - and its speech is universal.

"How many of us ever stop to think

Of music as a wondrous magic link

With God; taking sometimes the place of prayer,

When words have failed us 'neath the weight of care?

Music, that knows no country, race or creed;

But gives to each according to his need."

Music was frequently combined with the spoken word - to express more adequately and eloquently what was in the heart and mind of man when they contemplated creation and when they thought of Him who is the Master of all creation.

Music is the subtlest medium, and the most direct and pliant for the utterances of the emotions and aspirations of man. Hence for its very beginning religion turned to music and allied itself with it in what has turned out to be an unbroken and seemingly an unbreakable covenant. There were times, especially in periods of religious reformatations, when elaborate ritualism came under strong attack, that all other forms of arts were disparaged - painting, sculpture, ornamentation - but seldom, if ever, the art of music.

The first artist-artizan mentioned in the Bible - next to God the Creator-Artist Himself - is Jubal - "he was the father of all those who play the lyre and the pipe." The Kinnor and the Ugav - the two most prominent musical instruments mentioned in the Bible in connection with religious worship. In the Biblical narrative Jubal comes



before Tubal-cain who was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The musical instruments came before the mechanical utilitarian instruments.

2) All religions of mankind from the most primitive to the most advanced and sophisticated combined music with worship. In the presence of the glory of life and the dark mystery of death - in moments of adoration, devotion, or supplication, or when the heart is filled with sorrow and overflowing with the joy of thanksgiving - the soul of man naturally seeks in song. At times he will employ a simple instrument of wood, or brass or string or horn further to amplify and channel the emotions and tumult, the longing and aspirations of his heart. As man developed, his music and its techniques developed with him. His instruments became more varied, his musical expression more refined, more elaborate, and more profound. Orchestras and choruses of trained singers became part of the ritual. But the great passions of the religious life remained fairly constant, and they accordingly found themselves into less adventurous forms than secular music did through the ages, into choral and harmonies which retained much of the past and the traditional, into strong, stately, simple and beautiful modes and melodies.

3) But in no religious literature of mankind is there such emphasis on music in religion - on song, vocal and instrumental, as an essential way of worshipping God - as in the Bible. Because we revere it so much, we are in danger of regarding our Bible as solemn and bleak beyond all love of song and joy. This is of course the very reverse of the truth. Not only is the Bible replete in so much that is dramatically and exaltingly human that it has inspired great art and the greatest artists to their most creative and important works, and especially musical artists and musical compositions - oratorios - operas and symphonies - one need but mention Palestrina, Bach, Hayden, Mendelssohn, Liszt - the Bible brought out great music in man, struck deep chords and evoked profound resonances - but the Bible itself sings - Song of Songs. It sings because it is a book of supreme faith in a living God of justice and of love - Who created a good world for man to dwell in;

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trees and plants to delight the heart of man". (Ber. 43b; Tos. Ber. 7.4) Everything in God's world of which man partakes for sustenance and for the satisfaction of his needs is holy, and therefore it is forbidden to a man to enjoy anything of this world without a benediction. (Ber. 35a)

*The Bible says*  
 "God's world is unutterably beautiful. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims His handiwork." (Ps. 19.1) No literature of any people of antiquity is so rich in the awareness and appreciation of the majestic grandeur of nature as the literature of ~~Israel~~ *the Bible*. "The beauty of the natural world is seldom made, in itself

and directly, an object of praise in the ancient world" (Edwyn Bevan, "Jerusalem Under the High Priests" (1948) p. 60) *One is aware of* ~~There is a~~ *among the ancients* strange dearth of exalted nature poetry in the ancient world, even among the Greeks. Greek culture was a product of city life. Architecture, sculpture, drama and philosophy were its supreme expressions. The Greeks saw many things clearly. They looked deep into the troubled heart of man. They speculated much about the true way to human happiness. They thought profoundly about the structure of their city states and the obligations of citizenship. In their literature they celebrated the great deeds of heroes, gods, and men. Their superb poetry, however, shares with the rest of their literature, the quality of being "to a peculiar degree anthropocentric in substance and secular in outlook." (Moses Hadas, "The Greek Poets" (1953) p. XIV) Schiller noted that "the impatient imagination of the Greeks traverses nature to pass beyond it to the drama of human life." Somehow, the Greeks did not lift up their eyes to the mountains--the mountains which were all around them. They worshipped many nature deities, sky and earth, sun and moon, river and sea, and the elemental forces of nature. But



things and flying birds! Let them all praise the name of the Lord! Hallelujah!"

Worship in ~~Jerusalem~~ <sup>the life</sup> was song--the song of a confident and joyous heart. ~~March on, my soul, with might!~~ (Jud. 5.21) The darkness of life, of course, was there, too, and the shadow of death, the vast sorrows and tribulations, the tears, the wrongs, the anguish, and the many broken hopes of mortal man. But the spirit of man was taught not to be utterly cast down. "Hope in God"! (Ps. 42.5) The human heart should deeply feel that God will at last wipe away all tears. "Weeping may tarry for the night but joy comes in the morning." (Ps. 30.5)

Let man therefore enjoy his life on earth, ~~and live with God who gave man a soul even in the night.~~ The wise physician of the body and soul, Ben Sira (3c. B.C.) writes: "Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good desire pass thee by, for there is no seeking of the dainties in the grave." (Ecclus. 14.14) There is much of sweetness in life—the joy of children, ~~who continue one's name on earth~~, the love of ~~one's wife~~ <sup>or husband</sup>, the companionship of friends, the pride of craftsmanship, ~~and the skilled work of our hands~~, the quest of knowledge, ~~the pipe and psaltery which make sweet melody~~ <sup>music</sup>, wine and beauty which lift up the heart of man, the sight of the "corn while it is yet green" and deeds of loving kindness. (Ecclus. 40.19f) ~~All these are God's bounties within the reach of man.~~

Rab. who together with Samuel, established the leading academy in Babylon and made it a center of Rabbinic studies, ~~ultimately to eclipse the academies of Palestine~~, is quoted as saying: "A man will some day have to give an account to God for all the good things which his eyes beheld and of which he refused to partake". (J. Kid.2.65d) Rab also said to his disciple R. Hamauna. "My son, according to



When religion stops singing - its day will be over.  
On Philosophy & theology alone it layd sumpt.  
There were choruses / Levites in the ancient Temple  
in Jerusalem and a great orchestra. The Book  
of Psalms mentions by name King David established  
an academy for ritual music - where hundreds of  
students divided into 24 groups were taught songs in  
the House the last with cymbals, harps and lyres.  
Book of Psalms mentions by name many unusual instruments -  
Reading of Scripture was always intoned - and diff. parts  
of cantillation were employed for diff. parts of the Scripture  
Lyrics were both over the music the Temple. - Church  
music - <sup>for psalms & songs</sup> prayers, ps., were chanted.

Judaism & Christianity are  
Jewish & Christian worship is inseparable without  
their music - When the organ plays, as the cantor sings,  
as the congregation raises its voice in an anthem,  
praise to the living God - then demons flee from the  
glorious God to enter, ~~as the spirits are expelled~~  
and our hearts begin to rise as the hymn of song  
to high and holy ~~places~~ places.



# A FESTIVAL

## OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC



PRESENTED BY  
CHURCHES OF OUR COMMUNITY  
IN COOPERATION WITH  
THE LAKEWOOD CIVIC CHORUS  
T.R. EVANS—CONDUCTOR

THE LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL CIVIC AUDITORIUM  
MAY 8, 1955 — 3:30 P.M.



# A FESTIVAL OF RELIGIOUS MUSIC

*Handel*

ORGAN PRELUDE ..... Dale D. Hutson

Cantabile ..... Cesar Franck

Improvisation on "St. Agnes" ..... Maurice Whitney

Adagio in E Major ..... Frank Bridge

Marche des Rois ..... Frederick Candlyn

INVOCATION ..... The Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. J. Schmit

GREETINGS ..... Charley Geiger, Chairman,  
Executive Committee,  
Pride of Progress

HOW LOVELY IS THY DWELLING PLACE ..... Johannes Brahms  
Nelson M. Harper, Conductor  
Raymond M. Schneider, Organist

HEAVENLY LIGHT ..... Kopyloff-Wilhowsky

PRAISE MY SOUL, THE KING OF HEAVEN ..... Mark Andrews  
Russell Abbott, Conductor  
Dorothy Abbott, Organist

REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION ..... Louis B. Seltzer  
Editor, the Cleveland Press

MUSIC, HANDMAIDEN OF RELIGION ..... Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver  
The Temple, Cleveland

SEARCH ME, O GOD ..... Carl Mueller

BLESSED ..... Robert Gomer Jones  
J. C. McCollum, Conductor  
Graham Marsh, Organist

The concluding group conducted by T. R. Evans  
LAUDAMUS ..... Daniel Protheroe  
John Corina, Organist

KING OF GLORY, KING OF PEACE ..... Eric Thiman  
Cyril Chinn, Organist

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY ..... Max Spicker  
Joy Lawrence, Organist

BENEDICTION ..... Rev. Irving Chase

THE LAKEWOOD CIVIC CHORUS is an activity of the Recreation Department, a function of Lakewood's Board of Education. Organized in 1936, it has been under the continuous direction of Mr. T. R. Evans, Supervisor of Music, Lakewood Public Schools.

The Chorus annually presents Handel's Messiah during the Christmas Season.

Your interest is invited. Auditions and rehearsals will continue in the early Fall. The Chorus meets Tuesday evenings.



## PARTICIPATING CHURCH CHOIRS AND CHORUSES

Brooklyn Memorial Methodist  
Rev. Franklin G. Markley  
Mrs. Chas. Harding, Director of Music

Church of the Ascension  
Rev. Stuart G. Cole  
Dale D. Hutson, Director of Music

Detroit Avenue Methodist  
Rev. S. J. Shoemaker  
Ulah Gilmore, Director of Music

Faith Lutheran  
Rev. Marvin E. Wilt  
Robert Jaynes, Director of Music

First Evangelical & Reformed  
Rev. Robert F. Beck  
Alton Conley, Director of Music

Lakewood Baptist  
Rev. Livingston H. Lomas  
Jas. C. McCollum, Director of Music

Lakewood Congregational  
Rev. Greoge E. Drew  
Russell Abbott, Director of Music

Lakewood Methodist  
Dr. George A. Fallon  
T. R. Evans, Director of Music

Lakewood Mother Singers  
Mrs. John Bloker, Director

Lakewood Presbyterian  
Rev. L. Wilson Kilgore  
Graham Marsh, Director of Music

Rockport Methodist  
Rev. Wilbur Goist  
Mrs. B. Vixseboxse, Director of Music

Rocky River Methodist  
Rev. Robert G. Scully  
Joy Lawrence, Director of Music

St. Clement's  
Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph J. Schmit  
Sister Ann Francis

St. James  
Rt. Rev. Msgr. Daniel T. Gallagher  
Raymond M. Schneider

Trinity Lutheran  
Rev. J. Louis Wolf  
John Corina, Director of Music

West Park Congregational  
Rev. Oliver H. Cowles  
Stanley Flack, Director of Music

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The committee wishes to express appreciation to the Young Women's Christian Association and Young Men's Christian Association for providing ushers.

A free will collection received at the exits will defray Festival expenses.

Ralph L. Anderson  
Robert F. Beck  
T. R. Evans  
Nelson N. Harper  
Del Jay Kinney