

The Evolution of Prayer and Song in Early Modern Berlin

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The history of Jews in Berlin can be traced back to the early thirteenth century, documented by tombstones later used in the construction of the fortress in Spandau. There had been a synagogue at the intersection of Kammerstraße and Lindenufer since at least the fourteenth century, but nothing remains of it.¹ The persecution of the Jews in 1510 not only halted the development of a Jewish presence, but also destroyed much of its evidence. Then, in 1663, after a series of expulsions, Great Elector Frederick William allowed Israel Aaron to enter Berlin as a court Jew. Eight years later, in May 1671, fifty prominent Jewish families from Vienna entered the city as *Schutzjuden*, protected Jews who paid for a residence permit that allowed them to engage in certain businesses and to settle among the population of Alt-Berlin. A lasting Jewish community emerged at a time when Berlin's population nearly tripled, reaching 17,500 in 1685. With a cemetery, a ritual bath, and a hospital, Berlin saw the beginning of a growing community that would contribute greatly to the culture of a burgeoning metropolis.

Since the Admission Edict of 1671 did not permit a public synagogue in Berlin, the court Jew Jost Liebmann established a private prayer space in 1684 on Spandauer Straße, between Spandauer Tor and Heidereutergasse, with his nephew and son-in-law Aron Benjamin Wolf serving as rabbi.² The establishment of similar spaces followed in the private homes of Koppel and Hirschel Riess³ as well as of Benedikt Veit (recognized in 1694 but established earlier) in Heidereutergasse⁴ and Wulf Salomon (1696)⁵ until December 1700, when this privilege (foreshadowed by a decision of November 1698) was

¹ See Simon Paulus, *Die Architektur der Synagoge im Mittelalter: Überlieferung und Bestand* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2007), 320.

² See Richard Borrmann, *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler von Berlin* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1893), 257; Ludwig Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin* (Berlin: Guttentag, 1871), 1: 21. Marcus Magnus (also known as Mordechai ben Manlin, Markus Magnus, Mordechai Dessau, and Mordechai Weisel) was said to have a private prayer space as well.

³ See Borrmann, *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler von Berlin*, 257.

⁴ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 1:21.

⁵ See Borrmann, *Die Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler von Berlin*, 257; Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 1:22.

restricted to the private synagogues of Jost Liebmann and David Riess, who had established his in 1697.⁶ By 1696, these private spaces employed a prayer leader and a bass singer, who presumably rotated and for whom, along with other personnel serving the growing community, special permits from the government had to be obtained.⁷

Around 1700, despite the heavy taxes imposed on them, another 117 Jewish families arrived from Vienna. With the steady growth of the Jewish population, their communal life was consolidated. By this time, the Jews of the region counted at least two musicians who navigated Berlin inside and outside the Jewish realm: Brentgen Marcus, a soprano with a widely admired voice whose musical education was supported by Frederick I of Prussia and who sang at the royal court,⁸ and the minstrel Levin (Lewin) Wolff (or Levi Wulff), who came from Prague and was permitted to play at festive occasions as long as he did not interfere with the working conditions of the local town musician (this rule also applied to non-Jewish musicians coming from outside of Berlin).⁹ It is unknown which instrument(s) he played. His 1697 permit allowed him to play in the synagogue on Friday evenings, a service the congregation did not utilize.¹⁰ There may have been an exception as years later, in 1724, in a dispute with the community, Wolff allegedly called himself a “*Spielmann* of the former Lippmann shul,” suggesting that he was playing in Jost Liebmann’s private synagogue.¹¹ Wolff played at Jewish weddings, a role he sought to formalize while the community tried to sideline him. The historiographer Ludwig Geiger captures the fraught relationship in a paragraph detailing Wolff’s request for conversion to Christianity on October 24, 1724, which he justified by stating that he had been persecuted by the local Jews and had been removed from the list of protected Jews by the elders after being included for 28 years, and that he had been financially disadvantaged.¹² In the end, he did not convert. Wolff’s fate after this episode remains unknown. Nevertheless, this incident suggests

⁶ A. Wyking [Ernst August Müller], ed., *Die Juden Berlins: Nach historischen Quellen* (3rd ed., Leipzig: Germanicus-Verlag, 1893), 93; David Josep, “Stiftshütte, Tempel- und Synagogenbauten,” *Ost und West* (1901): 845.

⁷ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:45.

⁸ See Isaak Münz, “Eine Jüdische Hof Sängerin vor 200 Jahren,” *Der Israelit* 25, no. 54 (July 7, 1884): 900–1 (supplement).

⁹ See Albert Wolf, “Fahrende Leute bei den Juden,” *Mittheilungen zur jüdischen Volkskunde* 28, no. 11 (1908): 152–53.

¹⁰ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 1:26–27. For additional sources, see *ibid.*, 1:57. Wulff also attended the Leipziger Messe in 1696 and 1698 (listed as attendee from Berlin, along with two unnamed musicians); see Max Freudenthal, “Leipziger Messegäste,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 45 (N. F. 9), no. 10/12 (1901): 460–509; and Wolf, “Fahrende Leute bei den Juden,” 150–52.

¹¹ Ludwig Geiger, “Vor hundert Jahren: Mittheilungen aus der Geschichte der Juden Berlins,” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 3, no. 2 (1889): 227.

¹² *Ibid.*, 226–27.

that the Berlin Jews of Viennese descent may have considered including instrumental music in worship, at least for a moment.

While prayer was restricted, to the extent that the *'Aleinu* had to be prayed in a modified form, to avoid “suspicious” words (Christians found the line referring to the worship of others as vain and empty to be offensive), the nature and sound of the prayer song in private prayer spaces remain unknown.¹³ Purim, with its “wretched music,” could not be celebrated publicly.¹⁴ But with the establishment of the first public synagogue, change was on the horizon. Indeed, long before the reforms that swept Prussia’s synagogues in the first decades of the nineteenth century, a premonition emerged in Berlin that foreshadowed the transformations that would also affect attitudes toward music and sound.

In this article I attempt to reconstruct the time leading up to Reform, focusing on the evolving role of music and prayer (its text and language) in the worship of Berlin Jews. It gives testimony to moments of a changing soundscape that foreshadow the more drastic changes that would ensue in the early nineteenth century—albeit in a nonlinear development that begins with the institutionalization of the public synagogue in the early eighteenth century and ends with “Sara Levy’s world,” shortly after the establishment of Jewish salons in the 1780s.¹⁵ The temporal focus of this study thus spans a period that both precedes and overlaps with the Haskalah (widely considered to have begun in 1743), in order to show that the integration of the vernacular and music into worship was a process both independent of but later linked to Jewish Enlightenment, emancipation, and acculturation.

I thus challenge and nuance Steven Lowenstein’s statement that “until the late 1830s, the atmosphere of the Berlin synagogues was merely that of *Alt-Orthodoxie* with rabbis who could not speak German, cantors who knew no Hebrew grammar, and decorum virtually absent.”¹⁶ As we shall see, choral singing existed well before the year Lowenstein considered as a turning point, that is 1838, when Aron Hirsch Heymann became chairman of the synagogue (though later than in the Jewish communities of Amsterdam and Hamburg [ca. 1700] and Frankfurt am Main [ca. 1714], among others).

In the absence of surviving primary sources, I draw heavily on historiography, while acknowledging that it presents an incomplete picture.

¹³ See Frederick I of Prussia, “[Edict wegen des Juden-Gebeths Alenu etc und daß sie einige Worte auslassen, nicht ausspeyen, noch dabey hinweg springen sollen](#),” August 28, 1703.

¹⁴ Anon., “Briefe aus Berlin,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 3, no. 6 (1854): 218.

¹⁵ For a collection of essays on this time, see *Sara Levy’s World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin*, ed. Rebecca Cypess and Nancy Sinkoff (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

¹⁶ Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 179.

Contemporaneous records, most of them lost, filtered into nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writings, most notably by Ludwig Geiger and Aron Friedman, who published his in the supplements of *Die jüdische Presse*;¹⁷ and to a lesser extent Eliezer Landshuth's 1884 chronicle of prominent Berlin Jews from 1671 to 1871, *Toldot 'anshe ha-shem u-fe'ulatam ba-'adat Berlin*.¹⁸

In 1711, after long resistance from the operators of private synagogues, influential members of the community, Marcus Magnus foremost among them, and the Prussian authorities agreed on the acquisition of land on Heidereutergasse for the construction of a public synagogue. The synagogue was built on this property beginning May 9, 1712, when the foundation stone was laid. The first known ḥazzan of the congregation was the scribe Arye Löb Lipschütz (d. 1736), who had moved from Dessau to Berlin in 1706.¹⁹ He was the son of the ḥazzan of Posen, known as Reb Chajim (d. 1694). Lipschütz served as the prayer leader at the synagogue's dedication ceremony on September 1, 1714. There is no record describing his voice or specific function. Only four years later do we find another trace of his activity. On Passover in 1718, Frederick William I, King of Prussia, attended services with his wife Sophie Dorothea and his son, who would later become Frederick II of Prussia; Lipschütz recited a Hebrew prayer that he had written especially for the occasion.²⁰ The prayer blessed the royal family, thanked the king for his generosity to the Jewish community, and praised his leadership.

Lipschütz became an integral part of the community in leading services and serving in an official capacity as secretary, and in other functions from 1724 on. By 1739 he was receiving a salary equal to that of the second rabbi, although he had to pay "his bass" out of that salary, an indication that at least one *meshorer* (who received free lodging, presumably because he was an itinerant) was assisting the ḥazzan at that time. There was also an *Unterchasan* (assistant ḥazzan) who received a smaller salary. All salaries were doubled during the month of Tishri, increased one and a half times during Nissan, and increased

¹⁷ Friedmann's articles were collected and reprinted as "Aus der Alten Synagoge der Berliner Jüdischen Gemeinde (1714–1914)," in *Moritz Stern: Geschichte der Alten Synagoge zu Berlin*, ed. Hermann Simon (Teetz: Hentrich, 2007), 378–423.

¹⁸ Eliezer Landshuth, *Toldot 'anshe ha-shem u-fe'ulatam ba-'adat Berlin* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1884), <https://tablet.otzar.org/#/book/25601/p/-1/t/1/fs/0/start/0/end/0/c> (accessed July 28, 2024).

¹⁹ Eduard Birnbaum, "L. Lewandowski (Fortsetzung)," *Jeschurun [Tilsit]* 3, no. 9 (March 2, 1894): 124; Josef Meisl, ed., *Pinkas Kehilat Berlin, 5483–5614* (Protokollbuch der jüdischen Gemeinde Berlin, 1723–1854) / (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1962), 55–56.

²⁰ Sally Gumbinner, "Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinde Berlins im 18. Jahrhundert. II," *Vossische Zeitung* (July 2, 1876).

one and a quarter times during Sivan, a system that remained in place for some time to support the extra work during the Jewish holidays.²¹ Salaries would continue to be subject to negotiation and taxation. The first ḥazzan had to lead all major services, weekday services only on Monday or when the *Untercantor* was unable to cover them, as well as on holidays and Rosh Ḥodesh, and on circumcision ceremonies.²²

The sounds of the synagogue began to expand with the installation of patriotic services, some of which were held on the Sabbath. One such service, on Monday, July 2, 1742, celebrated the negotiations of the treaty between the Habsburg Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria, who was also Queen of Bohemia, and Frederick II of Prussia, better known as Frederick the Great, that would officially end the First Silesian War. On this occasion, the first of several Jewish patriotic hymns was sung.²³ The hymn consisted of eighteen verses preceded by the refrain in German and Hebrew—זמרו, אלוהים זמרו / זמרו למלכנו—(sing [to] God, sing / sing to our King, sing). The first verses rely heavily on musical narrative, stating that the singers are to process first, followed by the instrumentalists who are to render the psalms with joyful singing and kettledrums; violinists and wind players are to sing and play. The narrative is reminiscent of the festive processions of Jews that took place in Central Europe in 1678, 1716, and 1741, which were depicted and described in print.²⁴ However, no such processions of the Berlin Jews have been documented.

²¹ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:67. For information on earlier compensation and subsequent increases, see Meisl, *Protokollbuch*, LXXVI.

²² Meisl, *Protokollbuch*, LXXV, 4–6 (no. 10), 67–70, and (no. 74).

²³ The collection of these hymns from the years 1742 to 1858 was previously held at the Prussian State Library; it can no longer be located.

²⁴ See *Judaeorum Morologia, oder jüdisches Affen-Spiel / Das ist: Der jüdischen Gemeine zu Prage possir- und sehr lächerlicher Auffzug: Welchen Sie bey Celebrirung des Freuden-Festes über der höchst erfreulichen Geburt des Römischen Kaiserl. Printzens in der Juden-Statt daselbst öffentlich gehalten / und nachgehends ... zum Druck befördert worden* (Leipzig, 1678), 17, 20, and 21; a 1716 engraving inserted between fols. 92 and 93, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. 4o 1420; Johann Jacob Schudt, *Juedisches Franckfurter und Prager Freuden-Fest: Wegen der höchst-glücklichen Geburth des durchläuchtigsten käyserlichen Erb-Prinzens, vorstellend mit was Solennitäten die Franckfurter Juden selbiges celebrirt, auch ein besonders Lied, mit Sinn-Bilder und Devisen, darauff verfertigt; So dann den Curieusen kostbahren, doch recht possirlichen Auffzug, so die Prager Juden gehalten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1716); Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdischer Merckwürdigkeiten: Vorstellende was sich Curieuses und Denckwürdiges in den neuern Zeiten bey einigen Jahrhunderten mit denen in alle IV. Theile der Welt, sonderlich durch Teutschland zerstreuten Juden zugetragen / mit historischer Feder in drey Theilen beschrieben* (1714–18; repr., Berlin, 1922) and therein a copperplate engraving by Simon Franckel, captioned “Kostbar Zierlicher Aufzug, welcher wegen hoher Geburt des Durchleuchtigsten Erzherzogen und Prinzen von Österreich Josephi Benedicti Joannis Augusti Antonii Michaelis Adami zur allerunderthänigsten Freudensbezeugung von der Pragerischen Judenschaft den 24. April Ao 1741 gehalten worden. Welches der Primator Simon Frankel pro Memoria auf seine eigene Spesen in druckh verfassen lassen.”

The next patriotic service at the synagogue was held on Tuesday evening, December 28, 1745, to celebrate Frederick the Great's victory at the Battle of Kesselsdorf two weeks earlier. In attendance was Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel-Bevern, Queen of Prussia. Reb Leib Chasan (Löb Lipschütz's successor as ḥazzan) and the congregation sang a prayer of thanksgiving, "Zemer na'eh" (Pleasant Song), written by Chief Rabbi David Fränkel. They were accompanied by trumpets and kettledrums. Bass Menachem Mendel ben Benjamin Wolf Schwab (d. 1782) translated the German version of this song (created by Aaron Solomon Gumperz) into Yiddish.²⁵ The service concluded with the singing of Psalm 72, interspersed with trumpet and kettledrum fanfare and other music. In its report on the service, the *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* found the thanksgiving song to be pleasant.²⁶

These services are noteworthy tributes in light of Frederick the Great's even more rigorous enforcement of his father's 1730 policies with restrictive Jewish legislation in the *Revidirtes General-Privilegium und Reglement, vor die Judenschaft im Königreiche, Preussen* (Revised Privileges and Laws of Jewry in Royal Prussia) of April 1750. The third clause confirmed that now the congregation employed two ḥazzanim, along with two meshorerim (a discant and a bass), and explicitly stated that the "Obercantor" and the "Untercantor" were civil servants.²⁷ The *Untercantor* was probably Zvi Hirsch Lipschütz (also spelled Lifshitz and Lipschitz), son of Löb Lipschütz, and widely known by the derivative Hartog Leo (ca. 1710–1784). Hartog Leo was secretary of the Berlin community from 1736 and would serve in a similar capacity in Breslau until his death. He was known as "a man of formidable rabbinical learning and also versed in philosophy," but not as a singer.²⁸ He was in close contact with the young Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), who had come to Berlin from Dessau in 1743 as Moses ben Mendel, following his teacher David Fränkel, who had become rabbi of the synagogue the previous year. Fränkel studied science and philosophy, as well as vernacular languages. Like other early *maskilim*

²⁵ Landshuth, *Toledot*, 40–48.

²⁶ Anon., "Beschreibung der Ceremonien welche die Judenschaft in Berlin an dem ausserordentlich angestellten Danck- und Freuden-Feste den 28ten Decembr. 1745 in ihrer Synagoge begangen," *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, no. 155 (December 28, 1745). The paper reports also on a "glorious hymn of praise" sung "with great rejoicing of all the Jews" during the first day of Sukkot in October 1744, in conjunction with Prussian forces converging upon Prague, seizing the city on September 16 of that year; see *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, no. 154 (September 22, 1744).

²⁷ Frederick the Great, "[Erlaß eines Revidierten General-Privilegiums und Reglements vor die Judenschaft ... vom 17ten April 1750](#)" (Berlin, 1750), https://archive.org/details/ldpd_15834738_000/page/n7/mode/2up (accessed July 28, 2024).

²⁸ See Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1984), 181.

(adherents of the Haskalah), he championed the cause of the emerging Enlightenment.²⁹ Following his teacher's example, within ten years of his arrival, Mendelssohn too had established himself as a formidable scholar through the partly autodidactic study of languages and literature as well as philosophy.

To accompany his patriotic sermons, Fränkel regularly ordered corresponding hymns of thanksgiving with Hebrew texts from Hartog Leo and others. Shortly after the outbreak of the Seven Years' War (1756–63), Hartog Leo wrote a prayer, in Hebrew and German, in support of the troops, mentioning the trombones that sounded the call to war; it was incorporated into the daily prayers.³⁰ Also noteworthy is the "Danklied ueber den rühmlichen Sieg, Welchen der Herr unserm allergnädigsten Könige und Herr, Friderich II. am Sabbath den 5. Novembr. 1757. bey Roßbach in Sachsen verliehen" (Song of Thanksgiving for the Glorious Victory which the Lord Bestowed on our Most Gracious King and Lord Frederick II on Sabbath, November 5, 1757, at Rossbach in Saxony) and the "Danklied ueber den herrlichen und glorreichen Sieg, welchen Se. Majestaet unser allergnaedigster Koenig den 5. December 1757. bey Leuthen in Schlesien erfochten" (Song of Thanksgiving for the Great and Glorious Victory which His Majesty Our Most Gracious King Fought on December 5, 1757, at Leuthen in Silesia). The Hebrew text of the first hymn, on the occasion of the Battle of Rossbach during the Third Silesian War, is attributed to Mendelssohn, who translated it into German and published it with Friedrich Wilhelm Birnstiel (Berlin, 1757).³¹ Rendered in the synagogue by Hartog Leo, who held the Torah in his arms, the congregation closed the hymn with an Amen. The second hymn is attributed to Fränkel, with a translation from Hebrew into German by Mendelssohn, who also described the service held on December 10.³² The following year, Hartog Leo became first ḥazzan,

²⁹ See Gad Freudenthal, "Jewish Traditionalism and Early Modern Science: Rabbi Israel Zamose's Dialectic of Enlightenment (Berlin, 1744)," in *Thinking Impossibilities: The Intellectual Legacy of Amos Funkenstein*, ed. Robert S. Westman and David Biale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 71.

³⁰ The Hebrew original, "Elohim," a German translation, and a commentary can be found in *Moses Mendelssohn: Gesammelte Schriften (Jubiläumsausgabe)* (hereafter Mendelssohn, *JubA*), ed. Michael Brocke and Daniel Krochmalnik (facsimile reprint; Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1971–), 21/1: 54–55 and 21/2: 326–29. The German translation was first published in *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, no. 122 (October 9, 1756).

³¹ Moses Mendelssohn, *Zum Siegesfeste: Dankpredigt und Danklieder*, ed. Meyer Kayserling (Berlin: Louis Gerschel, 1866), 16–18. Gad Freudenthal argues that the Hebrew version of the sermon was written by Fränkel and has been wrongly attributed to Mendelssohn; see "Rabbi David Fränkel, Moses Mendelssohn, and the Beginning of the Berlin Haskalah: Reattributing a Patriotic Sermon (1757)," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 3–33. For a reprint of the German version, see also Mendelssohn, *JubA*, 10/2:390–93.

³² See Friedmann, "Aus der Alten Synagoge," 391–92.

succeeding Leib Chasan. In this capacity, he was engaged to pray on the Sabbath and holidays and to perform all known melodies on various occasions.

At the same time, Mendelssohn was formulating his views on music, such as in the first of the 1758 *Briefe über Kunst*, in a narrative that was not entirely divorced from religion:

Nowhere has the separation of the arts and sciences led to greater excesses than in regard to the art of music; the ultimate purpose of this priceless art is to make the effects of poetry on our minds more emphatic, lively, and fiery for the promotion of our happiness. When a chant in praise of deity, wisdom, or virtue is sung with the proper energy and is animated, as it were, by an accompanying instrument, it rules over our sensations in its own right. The mind of the sung words masters the soul; and the pleasing tones by which they are supported put our senses in the condition of that affect which is to be produced. The enthusiasm becomes general, we are swept away, as it were, against our will, and accompanied by joy and delight on the way to bliss.

This is the true ultimate purpose of the art of music.³³

Mendelssohn clearly promoted religious music, and even with instrumental accompaniment.³⁴

By 1762, Hartog Leo was creating programs for special services that included choral singing. An indication that music-making must have been on the rise came in February 1762, when Jews were ordered to abstain from music during the contemplative Christian season of Advent.³⁵ The following year, Mendelssohn took his turn at a patriotic celebration of the Treaty of Hubertusburg on March 12, contributing a German translation of an impassioned sermon (if not the Hebrew sermon itself), delivered by Chief Rabbi Aaron Mosessohn (Fränkel's successor) and hymns of peace in Hebrew (and German translation) by Hartog Leo collectively known as *שיר שלום* /

³³ “Nirgend hat die Trennung der Künste und der Wissenschaften zu größeren Ausschweifungen verleitet, als in Ansehung der Tonkunst. Der Endzweck dieser unschätzbaren Kunst ist, die Wirkungen der Dichtkunst in unser Gemüth, zur Beförderung unserer Glückseligkeit, nachdrücklicher, lebhafter und feuriger zu machen. Wenn ein Gesang zum Lobe der Gottheit, der Weisheit oder der Tugend mit der gehörigen Energie abgesungen, und von einem begleitenden Instrument gleichsam beseelt wird, so herrscht er eigenmächtig über unsere Empfindungen. Der Verstand der abgesungenen Worte bemeistert die Seele; und die annehmlichen Töne, von welchen sie unterstützt werden, setzen unsere Sinne in die Verfassung desjenigen Affects, welcher hervorgebracht werden soll. Die Begeisterung wird allgemein, wir werden gleichsam wider unsern Willen fortgerissen, und auf dem Wege zur Glückseligkeit von Freude und Entzückung begleitet. Dieses ist der wahre Endzweck der Tonkunst.” Mendelssohn, *JubA*, 2:168–69. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

³⁴ See Laurenz Lütteken, “Moses Mendelssohn und der musikästhetische Diskurs der Aufklärung,” in *Moses Mendelssohn im Spannungsfeld der Aufklärung*, ed. Michael Albrecht and Eva J. Enge (Stuttgart/Bad Canstatt: Friedrich Fromann, 2000), 159–93, and Wolfgang Suppan, “Moses Mendelssohn und die Musikästhetik des 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Die Musikforschung* 17 (1964): 22–33.

³⁵ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:118.

*Friedenslied ... auf den großen Tag, an welchem ... auf dem Schloße Hubertusburg ... Friede geschlossen wurde.*³⁶ This also included a choral work whose text encourages singing and especially choral singing as well as the playing of instruments (timpani and harps), uses musical metaphors such as God or the King as the “Ober-Sangmeister” and the hymn text as “neginot” (songs with instrumental accompaniment), and suggests the blowing of trombones and trumpets to make the joy of peace heard. He thus encouraged music-making on two levels: to give praise and to proclaim peace. Carl Friedrich Rellstab published a bilingual edition of the texts in the same year. The subsequent return of the King to Berlin was observed with a celebratory service to the sounds of Mendelssohn’s befitting ode.³⁷

In addition to patriotic events, the Jewish community also celebrated other occasions unrelated to traditional Jewish practices. In 1767 Mendelssohn wrote the German “Danklied der Judenschaft bey Entbindung der Prinzessin von Preußen” (Song of Thanks from the Jewish Community on the Birth of the Princess of Prussia) for precentor and congregation on the occasion of the birth of the first child of Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Crown Princess of Prussia, in May, and the “Brautlied auf die Vermählung der Prinzessin von Oranien” (Bridal Song for the Marriage of the Princess of Orange) for choir and voice. Mendelssohn’s bridal song for the wedding of Princess Wilhemina of Prussia in October was perceived as “warm and poetic.”³⁸ Written for choir and solo, its text similarly encourages singing and choral singing as well as the playing of string instruments, using musical analogies such as “Harfengriff” (literally, “harp’s grip”). This term refers to a technique for plucking the strings or a particular chord shape that resembles the hand position of a harpist. It is often used metaphorically in nonmusical contexts to describe a delicate, precise, or harmonious way of handling something.

The quality of these pieces goes beyond occasional poetry; whether they were set to music and by whom remains unknown. But in these works, Mendelssohn, following the example of his contemporaries, transformed poetry into acoustic art. He created “lyrical poems,” leaning on a form that emerged around 1750 and whose primary purpose was to be recited or sung aloud. Poetry, as an acoustic art, affected the microstructure of the poems themselves. As Johann Nikolaus Schneider has shown, late eighteenth-century poets artfully

³⁶ For further details, see Shmuel Feiner, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sage of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 57–58. See also Mendelssohn, *JubA*, 21/2:328–29.

³⁷ See Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 69.

³⁸ Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:130. Geiger confuses names and dates. The first song was in honor of the birth of Princess Frederica Charlotte of Prussia on May 7, 1767, and the bridal song was written for Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia, who married William V of Orange on October 4, 1767, in Berlin.

emphasized the acoustic in their poetry.³⁹ Over the course of the 1750s and 1760s, Mendelssohn thus instigated sonic shifts on several levels: a gradual move toward German joining Hebrew, the introduction of music through narrative form, and the introduction of actual music-making.

The bridal song, with musical accompaniment, was first heard during Sukkot. It was delivered by Aron Beer, also known as Aaron/Ahron Dov/Dob Baer/Bär (1739–1821), who had joined the community by 1765. By this time Hartog Leo may have been past his prime, or the community may have been looking for a more polished and educated voice. With Beer, a new era of ḥazzanut began.

Many aspects of Beer's life and work cannot be ascertained; accounts are contradictory. His early biographers relied on oral transmission rather than authoritative written records. This is aggravated by the lack of reliable sources. As a result, Beer became the subject of mythologizing and hagiography.⁴⁰ What can be said with certainty is that his birthplace (as inscribed on his later destroyed tombstone in the Jewish cemetery on Große Hamburger Straße in Berlin) was Poppenlauer, a rural town with a minuscule Jewish population in Lower Franconia. According to a notice in the *Berliner Wochenmeldungen* (1727–1790) and the community's register, he was the son of Gabriel, a rabbinical assessor in Reckendorf about whom nothing further is known.⁴¹ In the course of his life Beer married four times (within months after his wives' untimely deaths) and fathered at least three daughters and four sons.⁴² Some claim that Beer had served the community of Paderborn, but this cannot be verified. During Beer's time, Abraham Alexander served Paderborn as

³⁹ Johann Nikolaus Schneider, *Ins Ohr Geschrieben: Lyrik als akustische Kunst zwischen 1750 und 1800* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004).

⁴⁰ See Aron Friedmann, "Aron Beer," in *Lebensbilder berühmter Kantoren. II: Zum 100. Geburtstag des Königlichen Musikdirektors Professor weiland Louis Lewandowski* (Berlin: C. Boas, 1921), 27–29; Aron Friedmann, "Die Bedeutung der Alten Synagoge (Heidereutergasse Berlin) für die Entwicklung des Synagogengesanges," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 78, no. 37 (September 11, 1914): 439; Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, "Song and Singers of the Synagogue in the Eighteenth Century," *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume (1875–1925)* (1925; repr. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968): 412–17; Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* (New York: Henry Holt, 1929); and Birnbaum, "L. Lewandowski (Fortsetzung)," 124.

⁴¹ Meisl, *Protokollbuch*, 220 (no. 224).

⁴² Beer's first wife was Jochebed, daughter of Seligmann of Laudenbach. When she died in September of 1766, he married Bela (ca. 1744–1780), the daughter of Löb Schnapper; his third wife was Esther (d. 1807), the daughter of Jehuda Segal of Altona, known as "Krasje Hamburger"; and his fourth wife was the widow Cheiche (Hannchen) Burg (ca. 1755–1822), the daughter of Jacob Israel Sachs and Bilka Sachs. See Jacob Jacobson, *Jüdische Trauungen in Berlin 1759 bis 1813: Mit Ergänzungen für die Jahre 1723–1759* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 170, 273, 285, 539.

ḥazzan.⁴³ In a Yiddish letter dated October 20, 1816, to the Amsterdam ḥazzan Sholom J. Friede (1783–1854), Alexander’s son, who went by the names Avraham ben Sender and Alexander Abraham (1754–1820) and was a concertmaster in Duisburg, claimed that one of his brothers was married to Beer’s daughter and that most of Beer’s melodies were his own.⁴⁴

According to the rabbi and novelist Markus Lehmann (1831–1890), Daniel Itzig, the father-in-law of Rabbi David Friedländer, discovered Beer during a visit to Bamberg, where he heard him sing during synagogue services and recruited him for Berlin.⁴⁵ (Louis Lewandowski has perpetuated the myth that Beer was born in Bamberg.⁴⁶) In 1764, after reviewing 16 candidates, the community elders offered “the great meshorer” Beer a contract as first ḥazzan, for an initial three years, with the stipulation that he would not sing at circumcision and wedding ceremonies; his acceptance of gifts was also being restricted. He initially received 10 Reichsthaler per week, including a rent of 100 Gulden per year.⁴⁷

In time, Beer became so highly regarded that Carl von Ledebur and Heinrich Mendel later included him in their music lexicons, the latter highlighting his “unusually rich and powerfully flourishing, yet excellently trained” tenor voice and pointing to “the greatest sensation [he caused] as a precentor around 1768 [which] attracted music lovers far and wide who came to admire him.”⁴⁸ The occasion of this sensational performance remains a mystery.

On July 6, 1774, Beer received his approbation.⁴⁹ (Hartog Leo had left for Breslau.) That same year, the annual salary of the first ḥazzan (Beer) amounted to 384 + 10 Reichsthaler, that of the second ḥazzan (Yishai) to 240 Reichsthaler,

⁴³ See the documentation in *Historisches Handbuch der jüdischen Gemeinschaften in Westfalen und Lippe: Die Ortschaften und Territorien im heutigen Regierungsbezirk Detmold* (Münster: Ardey-Verlag, 2021), 585. Beer is not mentioned.

⁴⁴ Birnbaum, “L. Lewandowski (Fortsetzung),” 124. See also Israel Adler, *Hebrew Notated Manuscript Sources up to Circa 1840: A Descriptive and Thematic Catalogue with a Checklist of Printed Sources*, 2 vols. (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1989), 1:183. For the autograph, see Eduard Birnbaum Collection, MS Mus. 25, Library of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

⁴⁵ Markus Lehmann, *Vor hundert Jahren: Ein Bild aus der alten Berliner israelit. Gemeinde* (Mainz: Joh. Wirth’sche Hofbuchdruckerei, 1904), 38. A longer anecdote is printed in *Der Israelit* 65, no. 2 (January 10, 1924): [8].

⁴⁶ Birnbaum, “L. Lewandowski (Fortsetzung),” 124.

⁴⁷ Meisl, Protokollbuch, LXXVI and 229 (no. 224). On Beer’s fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1805, see *ibid.*, 230 (no. 225); for another mention, see *ibid.*, 232 (no. 229).

⁴⁸ Carl von Ledebur, *Tonkünstler-Lexicon Berlins von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (Berlin: Rauh, 1861). “Er besass eine in seltener Weise umfangreiche und kraftvoll blühende, dabei vorzüglich geschulte Tenorstimme, sodass er als Vorsänger um 1768 das grösste Aufsehen erregte und weit und breit die Musikfreunde herbeilockte, welche kamen, um ihn zu bewundern.” Heinrich Mendel, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon: Eine Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften—Für Gebildete aller Stände* (Berlin: Heimann, 1870), 508.

⁴⁹ Jacobson, *Jüdische Trauungen*, 170.

and that of the bass to 72 Reichsthaler.⁵⁰ Beer was subsequently eternalized in a painting by Johann Christoph Frisch. While the original portrait is now lost, a mezzotint based upon it is reproduced in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Aron Beer / Erster Vorsänger der Jüd. Gemeinde zu Berlin / Immer besing' ich des Ewigen Huld. Ps. 89 (Aron Beer / First precentor of the Jewish community of Berlin / I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. Psalm 89). Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Mezzotint plate by Benedict Heinrich Bendix, 1808.

This painting shows Beer almost clean-shaven, with only a hint of a beard, and wearing a sizeable ring. The portrait refutes Steven Lowenstein's claim that the *hazzan* did not wear a clerical robe until 1838.⁵¹ In fact, Beer's garb is reminiscent of that worn by Protestant clergy. Although no date is given for the now-lost painting, it is likely that Frisch conceived it around the same time as the portrait of Moses Mendelssohn—that is, around 1778. Beer would have been 39 years old and in his prime. (By at least 1814, Beer held the title of Ober-

⁵⁰ Meisl, *Protokollbuch*, LXXVI and 280 (no. 280).

⁵¹ Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 179.

Cantor, as can be gleaned from announcements in contemporaneous newspapers.)

In 1773, Zvi Hirsch Levin became chief rabbi of Berlin, working closely together with Mendelssohn and Beer, who lived in the same building at Rosengasse 15. Generally open to the Haskalah, but with limits and conservatism, Levin objected to Naphtali Herz Wessely's *Divrei shalom ve'emet* (Berlin, 1782), the first methodical composition in Hebrew on Jewish education written in the spirit of the Haskalah. Although traditional in orientation, it provoked controversy and divided Europe's rabbinical authorities. Mendelssohn defended Wessely, and Levin threatened to resign, but ultimately did not.⁵² Music, as Yael Sela has noted, was not part of the discussions nor of others within the circles of the maskilim.⁵³ But these decades, beginning roughly in the 1750s and culminating in two decisive moments in 1791 discussed below, foreshadowed the changes in the community's attitude toward music in the synagogue, initiated by Mendelssohn—a particularly important force, given his authority—and continued by Beer and by Joel Bril Löwe.

As Daniel Krochmalnik has noted, Mendelssohn did not degrade sacred music as a mere accompaniment. On the contrary, he emphasized the origin of Hebrew poetry in music and pointed to the amplification of the emotional effect through music, as can be seen in his approach to the translation of Psalm 68 (conceived in the 1770s or early 1780s) and to the Song of the Sea (Exodus 2:15–21) in his Hebrew commentary on and German translation of the Pentateuch, known as the *Bi'ur* (Elucidation, 1780–83), as well as the introduction to it, *Or la-netivah* (Light for the Way).⁵⁴ (His attitude toward the aesthetic aspects of biblical poetry leans on the thoughts of Robert Lowth, which he engaged with in 1757 in his extensive and comprehensive review of the literary scholar's Latin lectures *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*.⁵⁵) Similarly, Elias Sacks has analyzed how Mendelssohn's stance toward music shaped his thinking and writing about cantillation.⁵⁶ Indeed, in the words of Abigail

⁵² See Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 182.

⁵³ Yael Sela, "Songs of the Nation: The Book of Psalms in Late Eighteenth-Century Jewish Enlightenment," *The Musical Quarterly* 101 (2018): 331.

⁵⁴ See Daniel Krochmalnik, "Das Andachtshaus der Vernunft: Zur sakralen Poesie und Musik bei Moses Mendelssohn," *Mendelssohn-Studien* 11 (1999): 34–38.

⁵⁵ See "De sacra poesi Hebraeorum, praelectiones academicae Oxonii habitae, a Roberto Lowth," in Mendelssohn, *JubA*, 4:20–62, especially 20–21.

⁵⁶ See Elias Sacks, "Poetry, Music, and the Limits of Harmony: Mendelssohn's Aesthetic Critique of Christianity," in *Sara Levy's World*, ed. Cypess and Minkoff, 132–33.

Gillman, it seemed to be a priority for Mendelssohn to make “the music of the Torah audible in a new way for a new generation of Jews.”⁵⁷

In late 1785, in his last known letter before his untimely death a few weeks later, Mendelssohn shared his thoughts on music and prayer with his friend Sophie Becker, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor:

You say the worldly wise does not pray; at least not aloud, not in song, but at most in thought. Sophie, when his hour comes and he is in the mood to pray, he will break out into words and song against his will. The most common person, I think, does not sing that God may hear him, and take pleasure in his melodies. We sing for our sake; and the wise man does that as well as the fool. Have you ever read the psalms with this intention? It seems to me that many psalms are of such a nature that they must be sung with true edification by the most enlightened people. I would again suggest my rendition of the psalms if it did not betray too much authorial weakness. This much is certain, the psalms have sweetened many a bitter hour for me; and I pray and sing them as often as I feel the need to pray and sing.⁵⁸

Mendelssohn recommended that prayer, especially the psalms, be sung for edification and to satisfy a latent need.⁵⁹ While his elaborations specifically pertained to *private* prayer, they prefigured developments in the public sphere.

A few weeks later, Mendelssohn died.⁶⁰ On Yom Kippur of that year, on October 2, Heidereutergasse Synagogue held a service with song and a prayer for the new king, Frederick Wilhelm II, whose reign would usher in a period of liberalization and reform in Prussia that would eventually have a positive impact on the Jewish community. At the end of 1789, the first draft of a rather modest set of reforms was drawn up by a special commission at the King’s request. However, it proposed the elimination of Jewish civil servants, leaving the

⁵⁷ Abigail Gillman, *A History of German Jewish Bible Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), viii.

⁵⁸ “Sie sagen, der Weltweise bete nicht; wenigstens nicht laut, nicht mit Gesang, sondern höchstens in Gedanken. Sophie! wenn seine Stunde kommt und er zum Beten gestimmt ist, so wird er wider seinen Willen in Wort und Gesang ausbrechen. Der gemeinste Mensch, dünkt mich, singt nicht, daß Gott ihn höre und an seinen Melodien Gefallen finde. Wir singen unserthalben; und das thut der Weise so gut als der Thor. Haben Sie je die Psalmen in dieser Absicht gelesen? Mich dünkt, viele Psalmen sind von der Art, daß sie von den aufgeklärtesten Menschen mit wahrer Erbauung gesungen werden müssen. Ich würde Ihnen abermals meine Übersetzung der Psalmen vorschlagen, wenn es nicht zu viel Autorschwachheit verriethe. So viel ist gewiß, mir haben die Psalmen manche bittere Stunde versüßt; und ich bete und singe sie, so oft ich ein Bedürfniß zu beten und zu singen bei mir verspüre.” Moses Mendelssohn to Sophie Becker, December 27, 1785, in Mendelssohn, *JubA*, 13:334.

⁵⁹ Mendelssohn evidently saw his German translation of the Psalms also appropriate to non-Jews. See Sacks, “Poetry, Music, and the Limits of Harmony,” 122–46.

⁶⁰ On Mendelssohn’s memorialization in music in 1787, see Yael Sela, “Music, Acculturation, and Haskalah between Berlin and Königsberg in the 1780s,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 103, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 352–84. *Sulamith und Eusebia, eine Trauercantate auf den Tod des jüdischen Weltweisen Moses Mendelsson*, on a text by Karl Wilhelm Ramler and set to music by Bernhard Wessely, was, however, not performed in the synagogue.

community with only one rabbi and one precentor.⁶¹ While no further details about music are transmitted, these years culminated in two moments in 1791.

Yael Sela has aptly discussed the series of events that led to the first moment, when music began to appear on the agenda and ideational discourse of Jewish Enlightenment in Prussia: the 1791 publication of “the biggest bestseller of the Haskalah,” *Sefer zemirot Yisra’el* (Book of the Songs of Israel). This edition of the Book of Psalms in Mendelssohn’s German translation in Hebrew letters and with Hebrew commentary also included three extensive introductions in Hebrew on biblical poetry and music by the young Jewish scholar and Haskalah proponent Joel Bril Löwe.⁶² His texts dealt with contemporaneous non-Jewish aesthetic and philological approaches to biblical poetry. According to Sela, by giving music a prominent place in the formulation of the poetics, historical origins, and prescribed practice of the psalms, the introductions in *Sefer zemirot Yisra’el* negotiated the place of Judaism in the general history of music, an emerging field of inquiry in mid-eighteenth-century Germany. The emphasis on the topos of music (and its loss) in the mythology of Jewish exile was a response to the Jewish consciousness of exile itself, the foundational ethos of diasporic Judaism, formative to the very impetus of the Haskalah as an ideational movement.⁶³

Incidentally, toward the end of the very same year (the beginning of the Hebrew year 5552), Aron Beer created the second moment, with his completion of a leather-bound manuscript that he had begun in 1765. Compiled in one folio volume with an illuminated title page in Hebrew, it was part of a larger collection (then estimated at 1210 pieces) that Aron Friedmann analyzed before 1914 when it was in the hands of Hugo Schlesinger. Beer’s collection, presumably assembled for personal use, was passed on to his successor, Asher Lion (1776–1863), and then to Moritz Deutsch of Breslau (1818–1892), Hugo Schlesinger, and Eduard Birnbaum (1855–1920), who donated the surviving materials (parts have been lost) to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, where they remain today.

In 1932, Abraham Zvi Idelsohn published a subset of 447 festival prayer melodies in transcription, along with Beer’s original 1791 preface to the leather-bound manuscript, in Hebrew with the Aramaic opening כִּסְּרִי (“with the help of

⁶¹ For a reprint of the sources with commentary, see Marion Schulte, *Über die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden in Preußen: Ziele und Motive der Reformzeit* (1787–1812) (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 487–90. For a nuanced discussion of the draft, see 174–91.

⁶² An annotated bilingual edition of Joel Bril’s Hebrew introductions to Moses Mendelssohn’s Psalms is scheduled to be published in 2025; see Yael Sela, *Book of the Songs of Israel: Three Introductions to Psalms on Poetry, Translation, and Music by Joel Bril (Berlin 1791)*, *Studies in Jewish History and Culture* 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2025).

⁶³ For a full account, see Sela, “Songs of the Nation,” 331–62.

heaven”).⁶⁴ Here Beer explains that the volume covers more than the entire liturgical year, with different melodies for each Sabbath and the holidays. His rationale for providing a variety of melodies for the prayers—24 different melodies for *Lekha dodi*, 20 for the “Mizmor shir le-yom ha-shabbat” (the Psalm for the Sabbath day), and 32 different pieces for the texts Hodu and ’Ana from the Hallel service, among others—was to prevent the congregation from singing along with what Beer designated as “sheliaḥ tzibur” (representative of the congregation, i.e., the ḥazzan), as this would only confuse him. But more importantly, such congregational singing would conflict with the halakhic ruling in the Babylonian Talmud that two voices should not be heard at the same time (תרי קלא לא משתמר; Beer writes כי טרי קלא לא משתמר). Singing along, according to Beer, was a phenomenon that “plagued” other ḥazzanim as well.⁶⁵ (Beer used the term מנגנים, which in other contexts refers to “players”⁶⁶ or instrumentalists in general, and Friedmann saw the melodies as better suited to be played on the violin or piano.⁶⁷) In a second section of his *Melodienschatz*, Idelsohn published 11 numbers, most of which were originally conceived by Beer and exhibit late Baroque/early Classical flourishes (some bear the dates 1782 and 1783). A detailed description of the manuscripts can be found in Idelsohn’s *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* and elsewhere.⁶⁸

By including of melodies by fellow ḥazzanim from Amsterdam to London, from eastern Prussia to southern Germany and Alsace (and possibly non-Jewish composers), Beer’s 1791 collection points to an aspirational and rising cosmopolitanism, while respecting local history by documenting the melodies of his predecessors (most notably Leib Chasan). And while Beer’s preface has previously been interpreted as discouraging congregational participation, it can also be understood as an attempt to support a concertante service that is orderly and led by a skilled soloist-prayer leader. Beer argued on the basis of the Halakhah for solo delivery, but many of the melodies in his compendium display a virtuosity that suggests artistic, even concertante, worship in tandem with secular musical styles of his time.

⁶⁴ Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Der Synagogengesang der deutschen Juden im 18. Jahrhundert. VI: Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz* (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, 1932). See also Adler, *Hebrew Notated Manuscripts*, 240–70, 403–8. The manuscript is located the Eduard Birnbaum Collection, MS Mus. 53 and Mus. 102a–b, Library of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

⁶⁵ Many thanks to Guy Shaked for helping translate the preface. A published English translation can be found in Adler, *Hebrew Notated Manuscripts*, 242.

⁶⁶ See Don Harrán, *Three Early Modern Hebrew Scholars on the Mysteries of Song* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 365.

⁶⁷ Friedmann, “Die Bedeutung,” 439.

⁶⁸ See especially Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, “Song and Singers of the Synagogue in the Eighteenth Century,” *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume (1875–1925)* (1925; repr. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968), 412–17.

Yael Sela asserts that Bril, in his 1791 *Sefer zemirot Yisra'el*, “negotiate[s] the place of Judaism in the general history of music.”⁶⁹ Applying this thought to Beer, one might as well argue that his compendium, reinforced by the preface, promoted a well-executed song in worship delivered by a skilled singer. Thus, Beer and Bril, though coming from different sides and having different objectives, promote the inclusion of music in Jewish worship, and both in the same year.

Some time would have to pass before further changes would unfold that would more clearly oppose the continuation of music’s obliteration from Jewish worship. In an open letter, written in 1799, the banker, writer, and communal leader David Friedländer, an ardent supporter of Jewish emancipation, wrote that prayers and “devotional exercises” were only empty babble that could neither elevate nor further holy experiences in a well-ordered mind.⁷⁰ More than a decade later, the Prussian Edict of Emancipation of 1812, which granted citizenship to all Jews, sparked further debate. In response, Friedländer called for sweeping reforms in liturgy and education; and he honed his earlier thoughts, stating in October 1812 that “the Hebrew language can no longer be for anyone that uplifting to the mind; those who understand it must be disgusted by most of the prayers, and even the beautiful pieces lose their dignity for the lack of musical accompaniment.”⁷¹ Although contemporaries such as Friedrich Dohm and Abraham Muhr rejected the departure from tradition, both advocated for music in worship as well.⁷² Friedländer continued the explicit mention of music in 1816, when he wrote that “singing and prayer, in view of the poor presentation, become empty babble even for those who know the language,” a sentence he later reiterated.⁷³ His distinction between song and prayer, which underlines the place of music in the synagogue, accompanied experimentations

⁶⁹ Sela, “Songs of the Nation,” 332.

⁷⁰ See David Friedländer, *Sendschreiben an Seine Hochwürden Herrn Oberconsistorialrath und Probst Teller zu Berlin* (Berlin: Mylius, 1799), 50.

⁷¹ “Die hebräische Sprache kann für keinen mehr diese heilige, das Gemüth erhebende sein; wer sie versteht, den müssen die meisten Gebete anwidern und selbst die schönen Stücke verlieren an ihrer Würde durch die mangelnde musikalische Begleitung.” Cited after Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:212.

⁷² See Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, 2:217–18. In 1813, Abraham Muhr published his pamphlet “Jerubaal” in response to David Friedländer’s “Ein Wort zu seiner Zeit (Über die, durch die neue Organisation der Judenschaften in den preußischen Staaten notwendig gewordene, Umbildung).” For an English translation of Abraham’s Muhr’s Jerubaal, see Abraham Muhr, “[Jerubbaal or About the Religious Reform of the Jews in Prussian States](#),” translated with commentary by Eva T. Caemmerer (Berlin 2020), 25 (accessed July 28, 2024).

⁷³ “Gesang und Gebet wird selbst für den Sprachkundigen, bey dem widrigen Vortrage, leeres Geplärr.” See also David Friedländer, *Ueber die Verbesserung der Israeliten im Königreich Pohlen: Ein von der Regierung daselbst im Jahr 1816 abgefordertes Gutachten* (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1819), 151. See also the fifteenth letter in David Friedländer, *An die Verehrer, Freunde und Schüler Jerusalem’s, Spalding’s, Teller’s, Herder’s und Löfflers* (Berlin: C. H. F. Hartmann, 1823), 151.

with a new model of worship in private prayer spaces in which song and sound took on a new significance that would eventually give way to Reform.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ These developments are discussed in Tina Frühauf, “Towards an Aesthetics of the “New Jew”: The Transformations of Music and Sound in Berlin’s Private Prayer Spaces (1815–1823),” *Revue de musicologie*, forthcoming.