

# ***Jews and Sufis: Shared Musical Traditions***

directed by **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**

featured scholar **Edwin Seroussi**

*DÜNYA Ensemble*

**Rıdvan Aydınlı**/ney, voice, **George Lernis**/percussion,  
**Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol**/ud, ney, voice

and *guests*

**Edwin Seroussi**, voice and **Joseph Alpar**, santur, voice

SEPTEMBER 12, 2019, 7:30 PM, JORDAN HALL, NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

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## **PROGRAM**

**INTRODUCTION** by Edwin Seroussi

### **PART I. THE OTTOMAN-JEWISH MUSICAL LEGACY**

Since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *maftirim* repertoire--Hebrew devotional poetry (*piyyutim*) set to Ottoman/Turkish *makam* music for use in the synagogue--has demonstrated the close and continuing relationship Jews established with members of Muslim mystical brotherhoods in the Ottoman regions. Some of these Sufi groups were also viewed as heterodox religious minorities by the Muslim mainstream. Unlike its Ottoman counterparts, *maftirim* is an *a capella* choral tradition, due to the banning of musical instruments in the synagogue on Sabbaths and Holy Days. The *piyyutim* are set either to music newly composed in the Ottoman/Turkish style by Jewish composers, or to melodies of secular Ottoman court music and Sufi devotional music. For our own time, the *maftirim* phenomenon may also provide models for how religious minorities can thrive and enrich each other within otherwise alien environments. Following standard *maftirim* practice, this first set features unaccompanied men's voices, grouped by *makam*, Ottoman/Turkish melodic mode.

**Vocal Taksim** (improvisation) **in Hebrew** – Psalms 69:31, Jeremiah 16:19 and Judges 5:3

*Ahal'la shem Elohim be'shir va'agadelenu be'toda*

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving

*Adonay uzi uma'uzi um'nusi beyom tzara*

Oh Lord, my strength, and my stronghold, and my refuge in the day of affliction

*Shim'u melachim ha'azinu rozenim anochi lashem anochi ashirah*

Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; I will sing to the Lord; I will intone a melody

**Ya'elam Shavani** Text: Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625), Music: Avtalyon ben Mordechai (17<sup>th</sup> c.) Makam: Hüseyini, Usul: Muhammes

*Ya'elam shavani ne'elam zemani / Matay shav ani el moshav iram / Shur tsur Israel binkha eved El/ Ahuf magdiel / Ve-aluf iram - Ana el li ha'azen*

I was captured by Ya'elam (a son of Esau, i.e. a symbol of the Christians) / My history came to an end / And when I return to their areas of settlement (of the Christians) / Watch Rock of Israel your son enslaved / by the chiefs of Magdiel and Iram (i.e. the leaders of the Christian tribes) / God, please listen to me!

**El Shelah Et Tishbi** Text: Anonymous, Music: Avtalyon ben Mordechai  
Makam: Isfahan, Usul: Yürük Semai

*El shelah et Tishbi / Behol beti hu neeman / Tamun hu behubbi / Le-Yisrael sham mezumman*

God, send the Tishbite / "He is trusted throughout my household" / He is hidden in my bosom / For Israel he is invited there

**Kezerem Kabbir** Text: Rabbi Abraham Papo (20<sup>th</sup> c.), Music: Moshe Cordova (1881-1965), Makam: Hicaz, Usul: Sengin Semai

*Kezerem kabbir sa'ar katev / Shotsef bahurim beza'am ve-evra / Menudde ofel middam harev / Litmon bahorim bematsok vetsara*

As a mighty stream in a destructive storm / carries away young men in fury and rage / An outcast, darkened by the blood of a sword / was to hide in holes of distress and oppression

**Hadesh Kecedem** Text and possibly music by Haim Aboab (19<sup>th</sup> c.)  
Makam: Hicaz, Usul: Yürük Semai

*Hadesh kecedem yameinu shokhen zevula / Lishkon kavod be-artseinu na'avah tehila / Yarum venisah karneinu me'od nahahla / Navo el menukhateinu el ha-nakhala.*

May the one who dwells on high renew our days once more / and may the presence to which all praise is due rest upon the earth in glory / May the one who dwells on high raise us to the highest peaks and bring us to the rest and the inheritance we seek.

## PART II. BEKTAŞI SUFIS AND MAFTIRIM

The close relationships between Jewish and Muslim mystics in the Ottoman world are especially visible in the musical connections with the Mevlevi and Bektaşi Sufi orders. This part of our program is based on the relationship of the maftirim repertoire with that of the Bektaşi dervishes, a heterodox form of mystical Islam with strong Shiite tendencies. In this set we include instrumental music along with Hebrew poetry adapted to pre-existing Bektaşi hymns (commonly referred to as *nefes*, lit. "breath"). We have interspersed some of these Hebrew pieces with a number of Bektaşi nefes in Turkish, linking them through their common melodic modes (makam) and rhythmic cycles (usul).

### Ud Taksim

**Shakhar Avak'shekha** - a piyyut by Shelomo Ben Yehuda Ibn Gevirol (1021-1058) adapted by Noam Sender using the music of a Bektaşi Hüseyini nefes.

Makam: Hüseyini, Usul: Ağır Düyek

*Shahar avak'shekha tsuri u'misgavi, e'erokh le'fanekha shahri vegam arvi. Lifney gedulat'kha e'emod ve'ebahel, ki ei'nekha tir'eh kol makh'shavot libi. Ma ze asher yu'khal halev ve'halashon la'asot, u'ma ko'ah ru'hi be'tokh kirbi. Hineh lekha ti'tav zimrat enosh, al ken odekha be'od nishmat Eloha bi.*

At dawn I seek you, Refuge Rock sublime; My morning prayers I offer, and those at evening time. I tremble in Your awesome Presence, contrite, For my deepest secrets lie stripped before Your sight. My tongue, what can I say? My heart, what can I do? What is my strength, what is my spirit too? But should music be sweet to You in mortal key, Your praises I sing so long as breath's in me.

**Yesha El Hay Tohil** Text: Israel Najara, Music: Anonymous  
and

**Gel Gönül Sabreyle** Text: Pir Sultan Abdal (ca. 1480-1550), Music: Anonymous  
Makam: Uşşak, Usul: Curcuna

The text of the first maftirim song here is a piyyut by Israel Najara which the poet intended it to be sung to the melody of the following Bektaşî poem by Pir Sultan Abdal well known during his time. Since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Bektaşî melody of this particular poem has been lost. Noam Sender has adapted the poem by Najara to a melody used nowadays for a different Bektaşî nefes that follows the same syllabic structure. To the same melody, Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol has adapted the original Bektaşî poem by Pir Sultan Abdal as well.

*Yesha el hay tohil lev soled behil* Living God provide deliverance to an exulting heart  
*Ki od el hay eliyon yateh al tziyon* The Heavenly Living God will still favor Zion  
*Lev nishbar venidka pedut el hakeh* Broken and dismayed heart, expect heavenly redemption  
*Lev ashuk veratzutz od tashuv lasus* Weary and exhausted heart, you shall rejoice again!

*Gel gönül sabreyle katlan bu cevre* O my heart, be patient and bear this pain  
*Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür* Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day  
*Niceleri kondu göçtü bu hane* So many came to, and left this inn  
*Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür* Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day

**Mehullal Shem** Text: Anonymous, Music: Behor Mevorah (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.)  
 Makam: Uşşak, Usul: Katikofti

and

**İnsan Derler idi** Text and Music: Anonymous  
 Makam: Hüseyîni, Usul: Katikofti

A piyyut from the maftirim repertoire alternates in dialogue with a Turkish Bektaşî nefes using the same usul (rhythmic cycle). The similar structure and makam (mode) of the two songs suggest that they draw upon the same musical models.

*Mehullal shem Adonay ki asa itti pela'oth / Ba'u alay ra'oth rabboth / Delakuni velo mesa'uni*

Praised be the name of A, for he did wonders for me / Many evils have come upon me /  
 They have pursued me, but did not affect me

*İnsan insan derler idi* There was a talk about man  
*İnsan nedir şimdi bildim* I now understand what man is  
*Can deyu söylerler idi* And they talked about soul  
*Bu can nedir şimdi bildim* I now know what soul is

**Nefes in Hüseyîni Makam** - Text: Şemsi (1795-1884), Music: Anonymous, Usul: Sofyan

*Mescit ile medreseyi* The mosque and the medrese  
*Ismarladık zahitlere* We'll gladly give them to the ascetics  
*Hakka ibadet etmeğe* To pray to God  
*Yeter bize meyhaneler* The tavern is enough for us

\*\*\**intermission*\*\*\*

### PART III. SECULAR & SEMI-LITURGICAL SONGS

To this day, Turkish Sephardim still maintain spoken *Ladino*, a Romance language fusing elements of medieval Spanish and Hebrew which is also the language of Sephardic secular music. Much of Sephardic secular songs grew out of a larger shared urban folk music tradition from the Balkans and the Middle East, with direct counterparts in Turkish, Greek and Arabic. In this set we will feature several well-known Sephardic secular and semi-liturgical songs along with Sufi songs which have been adopted into Turkish secular music genres.

#### Çeng Taksim

**El Dio Alto** (poem in Judeo-Spanish for the outset of the Sabbath) Text: Abraham Toledo, Salonica (late 17<sup>th</sup>-early 18<sup>th</sup> century)

El Dio alto con su gracia, mos mande muncha ganancia, non veamos mal ni ansia, a nos y a todo Israel. / Bendicho el Abastado, que mos dió día honrado, cada šabat mejorado, a nos y a todo Israel./ Rogo al Dio de contino, que esté en nuestro tino, non mos manque pan ni vino, a nos y a todo Israel. / Vos que soš Padre rajmán, mandamos el pastor neemán, que mos sea de buen simán, a nos y a todo Israel.

May God Almighty with His Grace bring us much fortune, may we experience no evil or worry, to us and to all of Israel. / Blessed is the Almighty who provided us an honored day, each Sabbath better than the last one, to us and all of Israel./ I pray to God that He may remain in our thoughts, that we may never lack bread nor wine, to us and all of Israel./ O merciful Father, send us the faithful shepherd, may it be a good omen, to us and all of Israel.

**Rabbi Hananya** (Mishna, Makkot 3, 16) ending verses of the ritual recitation of **Pirke Avot** (Ethics of the Fathers) between Passover and Shavuot. Ottoman Ladino transliteration by Eliezer Papo.

*Ribi Hananya ijo de Akashya dizyen: envelunto el santo bendicho el por mereser a Yisrael. Por tatuo munchigo a eyos ley i enkomendansyas: ke ansi dize el pasuk: envelunto akadosh baruh u por su djustidad: engrandeskaze la ley i enforteskaze.*

Rabbi Hananya ben Akashya said: “The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to make the people of Israel meritorious; therefore He gave them Torah and commandments in abundant measure, as it is written (Isaiah 42, 21): ‘Adonay desired, for the sake of his [Israel’s] righteousness, to make the Torah great and glorious.’

### **Demedim mi?**

Text: Pir Sultan Abdal, Music: anonymous

This Bektaşi nefes was covered by a Turkish Rock icon, Cem Karaca (1945-2004) in the 70s and was very popular at the time.

*Güzel aşık cevrimizi  
Çekemezsin demedim mi  
Bu bir rıza lokmasıdır  
Yiyemezsin demedim mi*

Fellow dervish, you couldn’t handle  
Our difficulties didn’t I tell you?  
Here is sweet morsel of approval:  
You can’t eat it, didn’t I tell you?

### **Haydar Haydar**

Text and Music: Anonymous

This Bektaşi nefes was well-known in club performances and 78 RPM recordings in Istanbul as a secular song in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We therefore give it a treatment compatible with commercial music of the time.

*Ben melamet hırkasını kendim giydim eynime  
I’ve worn the cloak of melamet [a Sufi path] myself  
Ar ü namus şişesini taşa çaldım kime ne  
I smashed the bottle of virtue and decency, it’s no one’s business  
Ah Haydar Haydar taşa çaldım kime ne  
O Haydar [second name of Ali], I smashed it myself*

*Kah giderim medreseye ders okurum Hak için  
I both go to the religious school and study for God  
Kah giderim meyhaneye dem çekerim Aşk için  
and go to the tavern to drink for Love*

### **La Rosa Enflorese**

Text and Music: Anonymous

We learned this particular version of this well-known piece from the 1907 recording by the famous Jewish singer Haim Efendi (Haim Behar Menahem, 1853-1938), the earliest known recording of the piece, which also exhibits the characteristics of an up-beat popular Istanbul folk song.

*La rosa enflorese o en en el mez de May  
The rose blooms in the month of May  
Mi alma s'escurece sufriendo del amor*

My soul darkens suffering from love

*El bilbíllico canta el suspira del amor*

The nightingale sings with sighs of love

*Y la pasión la mata muchigua mi dolor*

And passion is killing me ever adding to my pain

#### **PART IV. MEVLEVÎ SUFIS AND MAFTIRIM**

In the maftirim tradition it is common to find piyyutim by well-known Jewish poets set to instrumental compositions by members of the *Mevlevi* dervish order, known in the West as the “whirling dervishes”. This final set offers examples of well-known Mevlevi music in dialogue with examples from the maftirim repertoire, as well as other instrumental and vocal examples that can be associated with this order.

#### **Ney Taksim**

**Ani Be-Rov Hasdekha** Text: Aharon Hamon (d. 1721), Music: *Bestenigar peşrev* by Dimitri Kantemir (1673-1723), Makam: Bestenigar, Usul: Berevşan

The text of this maftirim song here is an excerpt from a piyyut (by Aharon Hamon) which the poet intended it to be sung to the melody of the *Bestenigar peşrev* by Dimitri Kantemir well known during his time. Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol adapted this particular excerpt to a part of the Bestenigar peşrev.

*Ani berov hasdekha e'erokh levadakh / kol drakhai negdekha sameah nefesh avdakh*

I, for all your grace, shall set only for you / all my deeds, happy is the soul of your servant

**Perde Kaldırma** and **Kaside** (modulatory improvisations and a vocal improvisation in Turkish)

**Yeheme Levavi Biroti** Text: Israel Najara, Music: Neyzen Yusuf Paşa  
and

**Peşrev in Segah Makam** Music: Neyzen Yusuf Paşa (1821-1884), Usul: Devr-i Kebir

*Yeheme levavi biroti, tsari yiltosh einav negdi / Shinav yakharok gam yisaar, lehafitz hamon gdudi / Hish aneni Noraot, Elohei ha'Tsva'ot / Ad matai ketz pla'ot, esmah yagel kvodi / Shama le-shama samani, vegila avnei yesodi / Omar amar levale'a, ir nahalat tzvi hodi / Haletz na eved shadud, yartiah ke-sir vadud / Tsur bekha arutz gdud, lakh azamer be'odi.*

My heart fills with terror, when my enemy stares at me. Gnashing teeth, working up a storm to scatter my companions. Lord of hosts, I beg, respond swiftly with your awesome miracles. How long must I wait for them? How long for that joy and glory? My enemy destroyed me, till the foundations were laid bare and will bring down the glorious city that I long for. I cry out for redemption, a tormented slave, burning in his pain You are my strength; with you I can defeat an army, My song is for you as long as I live.

**Niyaz Ayini in Segah Makam** - Text and Music: Anonymous  
and

**Yismah Har Tsiyyon** Text: Yehuda (anonymous, perhaps Yehuda Benaroya, late 19<sup>th</sup> century), Music: Anonymous, Usul: Yürük Semai

A Jewish maftirim song alternates in a dialogue with the shortened version of a Turkish Mevlevi ayin (ceremony) music using the same usul (rhythmic cycle), only from the second part of the Mevlevi ayin. The makam (mode) and the similar melodic structure of the two pieces suggest that they most likely draw from a common ancestor.

*Dinle sözüümü sana derim özge edadır / Derviş olana lazım olan aşkı Hüdadır / Aşkın nesi var ise Maşuka fedadır / Sema safa cana şifa ruha gıdadır*

Listen to what I am saying, it is about another way / What a dervish needs is the love of God  
/ Whatever the lover possesses is sacrificed for the Beloved / The sema is joy, and it is good  
for body and soul

*Yismah har Tsiyyon ve-tagelna benoath Yehuda / U-shkhon bekirbah ki Atta Eli titten odah*  
Let Mount Zion rejoice and the towns of Judah exalt / Dwell in her midst, for it is You, my  
God, who grants glory to her

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Born in Montevideo, Uruguay and immigrated to Israel in 1971, **Edwin Seroussi** is the Emanuel Alexandre Professor of Musicology and Director of the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem since 2000. He has also held visiting professor positions and fellowships at major Israeli, American, Latin American and European universities. A recognized authority on the musical interactions between Muslims and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, he has also published works on diverse aspects of Sephardic music traditions as well as popular music in Israel. A 2018 Israel Prize laureate, in 2019 he is a Fellow at the Herbert J. Katz Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Joseph Alpar** is an ethnomusicologist specializing in Turkish, Greek, and Sephardic music. He recently defended his dissertation titled, “Synagogue Music and Jewish Practice in Modern Istanbul: Preserving Heritage, Bending Tradition” at The Graduate Center, CUNY. The founder and director of David's Harp, a Philadelphia-based Sephardic music ensemble, he is currently an adjunct instructor at the Bennington College.

**Rıdvan Aydınlı** is an Istanbul-based ney player, classical Ottoman music singer and researcher. He sings as part of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Istanbul Historical Turkish Music Ensemble and Lâmekân Ensemble where he is also a neyzen. Currently, he continues to study in the graduate program at Marmara University's Department of Turkish Religious Music, and he conducts the choir of the Boğazici University Turkish Music Club. For the 2019-2020 academic year, he is in residence at NEC as a special guest scholar.

Born and raised in Nicosia, Cyprus **George Lernis** is a drummer and world percussionist. George holds a bachelor's degree from Berklee College of Music in Jazz Performance and a master's degree from Longy Conservatory in Modern American Music. George has performed in venues such as the Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

Grammy nominated composer **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol** (DÜNYA, director) holds a Master's Degree in Jazz Composition and a Doctoral degree in Composition from New England Conservatory. He is currently a full-time faculty member at New England Conservatory and is the recipient of a number of awards including the Live Arts Boston Grant from The Boston Foundation, Creative City Grant from New England Foundation for the Arts, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music Performance Program Grant as well as a Fellowship in Turkish Culture and Art granted by Turkish Cultural Foundation.