Contents

Introduction

Many texts on aesthetics speak of music as the "purest" and most abstract of all arts. And yet, music's actual influence on the soul and on behavior can hardly be ignored. These characteristics of music have led religious leaders, mystics, doctors, psychologists, and magicians to enlist its advantages for their own needs. In this work, I consider such issues as: how did Jewish philosophers and religious mystics adopt the art of music over time? What did music convey and symbolize for them? These questions require us to address the course of a distinct aesthetic motif in Jewish thought, and this book deals with its manifestations and with the evolvement of music and the musical motif throughout its history.

Writing one absolute and unequivocal intellectual history is an impossible task. In a series of works, I have tried to show how every motif or issue in Jewish thought creates its own independent history. For example, an attempt to write the history of medieval Jewish thought from a messianic perspective will lead to one account of the flow of ideas, while an attempt to do so from the perspective of astrology or of esoteric writing will lead to an entirely different one.[1] Different writings of intellectual history are thus possible and can become a key to the development of a moderate deconstructionist approach. In this book, I examine the flow of ideas within Jewish thought in its attitude to music. The discussion adopts a substantive rather than a necessarily chronological pattern, classifying the manifestations of music in thought according to various aspects.

The integration between music and religion has a rich past and diverse expressions.[2] The encounter between music and Judaism is already evident in

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1 See Dov Schwartz, *Messianism in Medieval Jewish Thought*, trans. Batya Stein (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017); idem, *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, trans. David Louvish and Batya Stein (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005); idem, *Contradiction and Concealment in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) [Heb]. For a discussion of this approach, see idem, "Is It Possible to Write a History of Jewish Thought?," *The Annual of Rabbinic Judaism* 6 (2003): 285–300; and, in the same volume, see also Raphael Jospe, "A Response to Dov Schwartz," 301–308; Robert Eisen, "New Horizons in the Study of Jewish Thought: A Response to Dov Schwartz," 309–316; and Daniel J. Lasker, "The Canon of Medieval Jewish Philosophy: A Response to Dov Schwartz," 317–328. See also Dov Schwartz, "Response," 329–330.

2 See, for example, Lawrence Eugene Sullivan, ed., *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

the most ancient texts, such as the Bible and the Apocrypha, and entails both practical and theoretical dimensions. Many ethnomusicological works and articles in various encyclopedias have considered musical traditions in the Jewish world, and philosophical texts relating to music have appeared in different contexts. All have focused on the disciplinary dimension of the study of musical traditions, although a systematic and phenomenological analysis of music's standing in Jewish thought can hardly be found in the writings of thinkers and researchers.

True, the musical motif can hardly be compared to motifs such as messianism, astrology, or magic—conceptual topics that led to stormy disputes at various times and whose centrality is unquestionable. Messianism and astrology, for example, are crucial issues in Jewish thought. Hardly any comprehensive religious treatise, be it from the Middle Ages or the modern period, fails to deal with messianism. Astrology has also played a significant role, at least in the discussions of medieval thinkers. Music is not in that category and, as Israel Adler notes, "there is no doubt that, contrary to their concern with other branches of knowledge, the interest of Jewish thinkers in music has only been marginal."[3] An analysis of the musical component's role in Jewish thought, therefore, is meant to expose the paths of philosophical consciousness. In other words, I present a phenomenological analysis of Jewish thought where music is a distinct component of consciousness, but only one of several. Consciousness is not exhausted solely by its central moves; there are also marginal motifs that usually remain peripheral but may, at times, push forth to the center. Although music has not been a central motif in Jewish thought, it is one of its conscious components. Music was relegated to the sidelines for a variety of reasons. First, drawing away from music was perceived as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple.[4] Second, the creative and performative engagement with music was relatively rare in Jewish society. Third, religious music played a significant role in Christian ritual, leading to the banning of many musical pursuits. The polemical grappling of various thinkers with these facts will be my concern here.

To some extent, the situation remains unchanged at present. Music as an aesthetic element is not a vital conceptual factor among Israeli philosophers and intellectuals. Philosophical writings on aesthetics in English and French do not usually address musical aspects in depth. Outstanding scholars of aesthetics and aesthetic philosophy focus mainly on the visual arts and

3 Israel Adler, "Musicology and Jewish Studies," *Tatslil* 11 (1980): 24 [Heb].

4 Amnon Shiloah, *The Musical Legacy of Jewish Communities* (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1985–1987), unit 4, 17–19 [Heb].

literature as platforms for their studies. They do not discuss music, and their awareness of its basic concepts and of the foundations of musical theory appears questionable. By contrast, aesthetic studies in the German and Austrian tradition, for example, do usually include basic musical dimensions. The study of aesthetics in Israel, pursued by several distinguished scholars such as Dov Hertzenberg, Ruth Lorand, and Adi Tsemah, draws mainly on English and French sources and hardly ever discusses music. Scholars of Jewish thought are influenced in this regard by the research trend adopted in philosophy, and I find these circumstances disturbing.

I will argue that a process at times characteristic of the history of ideas has nevertheless taken place. A motif that had been marginalized in the practical life of the Jewish world—evident in the limited scope of composition and melody—reawakened in the spiritual world. In religious Jewish thought, the musical motif appears quite often and, at times, reflects the character of thought itself. In Jewish philosophy and in Kabbalah, the presence of the musical motif is consistent and meaningful, and this book will trace these manifestations.

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Several scholars have so far dealt with the history of Jewish music and with the place of music in Jewish texts in general. The significant work of scholars and musicologists such as Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, Eric Werner, Hanoch Avenary, Israel Adler, Don Harrán, Edwin Seroussi, and Eliyahu Schleiffer was limited to a historical description of Jewish music, to the exposure of musical texts in manuscripts and, at times, to the analysis of their conceptual aspects. Adler also systematically documented texts relating to music in his monumental work.[5] He resolutely determined: "Musicology is indeed an interdisciplinary area *par excellence*."[6] These scholars, however, did not consistently relate to the presence of music in Jewish philosophical and mystical thought and did not exhaustively analyze this presence. Musicologists did occasionally show interest in conceptual aspects of music, but scholars of Jewish thought did not rise to the challenge. Karl Erich Grözinger published an important analysis of music in the

5 Israel Adler, *RISM: Hebrew Writings concerning Music in Manuscripts and Printed Books: From Geonic Times Up to 1800* (Munich: G. Henle, 1975).

6 Adler, "Musicology," 21.

theology of ancient Jewish literature,[7] and, more recently, Kalman Bland discussed the visual aspect of Jewish thought.[8] The musical aspect of systematic Jewish thought, however, has not drawn scholarly attention.

Circumstances then changed mainly due to the work of two scholars—a Jewish thought expert, and a musicologist. Systematic discussions on the musical component in Jewish thought began to take shape in the studies of Moshe Idel, who deals with the musical element in two pioneering areas of his research—Abraham Abulafia's thought and the paths of ecstatic Kabbalah, and magic as an element in Jewish thought.

Idel engaged in a textual and cultural analysis of the musical component in Kabbalah and in magic. To some extent, Idel's scattered but fruitful studies may be said to have laid the foundations for the discussions in the present book. Occasionally, works appeared on the topic of music and thought but, usually, did not resort to the disciplinary tools of Jewish philosophy. Since Idel's initial studies, other scholars have also occasionally addressed the issue.

Musicologist Amnon Shiloah dealt with cultural and philosophical aspects of Jewish musical traditions from a broad perspective, covering a great deal of material from a distinctly conceptual angle. He also expanded the work on material discovered by musicologists such as Idelsohn and Adler, and at times pointed to their traces in texts of Jewish thought. Shiloah devoted many studies to the formative period of medieval Jewish thought (from Saadia Gaon to Maimonides) and to a later one (until the expulsion from Spain), with the implications of his studies spreading far beyond the musicological knowledge he analyzed.[9] Further works by scholars such as Harrán and Judith Cohen unfurl a broad panorama deeply connected to theoretical thought. Avner Bahat's book includes a historical and thematic summary of the connections between Judaism and music.[10]

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7 Karl Erich Grözinger, *Musik und Gesang in der Theologie der frühen jüdischen Literatur: Talmud, Midrasch, Mystik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982).

8 Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

9 Several studies were collected in Amnon Shiloah, *Music and Its Virtues in Islamic and Judaic Writings* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007). Note also the units he wrote for the Open University course *The Musical Legacy of Jewish Communities*. For an abridged and updated edition of these units, see Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992).

10 Avner Bahat, *Jewish Music: Introduction to its Treasures and Creators* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011) [Heb].

In the present book, I will point to several trends in systematic Jewish thought throughout its history, touching on the standing of music. I intend to examine the standing of music, the evaluation of its importance, and its various manifestations as a theological and metaphysical component of Jewish thought.[11] After posing a series of methodological questions in the first chapter, the next four chapters consider various trends that appeared in the writings of theologians, philosophers, and kabbalists. Chapter Two deals with changing evaluations of music in Jewish thought. Chapter Three examines the unique mark of the Jewish people in the consciousness of thinkers in the musical field. Chapter Four deals with the instrumental aspect of music as a tool for the attainment of religious and utilitarian ends. Chapter Five deals mainly with the perception of music as a cosmic, historical, and theological representation. Chapter Six addresses the standing of the musical motif in religious-Zionist thought, focusing on the thought of R. Abraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook. In this book, as noted, I mean to set an outline for the discussion without attempting to exhaust the subject. The original version of this book, which appeared in Hebrew, has been revised in the present translation, with some sections and chapters omitted.

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It is my pleasant duty to thank many colleagues who enriched my ideas in the pursuit of this endeavor: Yehoyada Amir, Uriel Barak, Binyamin Bar-Tikvah, Gabriel Birenbaum, Tova Cohen, R. Yitzhak Erlanger, Shmuel Feiner, Gideon Freudenthal, Zeev Gries, Karl Erich Grözinger, Yehoash Hirshberg, Moshe Idel, Atarah Isaacson, Raphael Jospe, R. Abraham Nahshon, Avi Sagi, Daniel Schwartz, and Daniel Statman. For our long and continuous exchange, I thank Avi Ben-Amitai, who contributed with grace and subtle humor to the clarity of the formulations and the coherence of the arguments. Thanks to Batya Stein, who translated the book and with whom I shared the ideas presented here, for our ongoing dialogue and for coping so successfully with the challenge posed by the complex sources cited. I feel fortunate to have her as a partner.

I am deeply grateful to all.

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11 An article that was the basis for the discussion in the book is Dov Schwartz, "Music and Jewish Thought: Preliminary Notes," in *Garment and Core: Jews and Their Musical Experiences,* ed. Eitan Avitsur, Marina Ritzarev, and Edwin Seroussi (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2012), 13–52 [Heb].

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Methodological Aspects

Examining music's standing in Jewish thought and tracing the course of the musical component in it requires a preliminary clarification of several methodological issues. Among them is the scope of the sources addressed (meaning the definition of the textual philosophical corpus serving as the basis of the study); the possible—or necessary—mutual connections between philosophy and music; the research approach to the corpus and to these connections, and its hermeneutical implications. In this chapter, I begin by determining the scope of the corpus, move on to the hermeneutical aspects of the musical component in Jewish thought, and conclude with a series of interfacing issues.

Thought

An attempt to deal with the musical component of Jewish thought needs to deal both with the very definition of this field and with the relationship between its conceptual elements (such as music) and the philosophical whole. I begin with some brief remarks on the definition of Jewish thought and move on to consider the place of music within the borders of this definition.

Jewish Thought

Given that this book does not focus on a specific period and addresses a corpus created over centuries, its scope needs to be demarcated. The term *Jewish thought* is hard to define clearly, as is also the place and standing of conceptual components within it. I begin with the term itself and wish to clarify at the start that, usually, references are to *systematic* Jewish thought that, as shown below, first appears in the Middle Ages.

Consider the two components—systematic and Jewish. For my current purpose, I define *systematic* thought as one that involves an orderly presentation of issues and conceptual questions and grapples with them consistently. Systematic thought takes one or more specific issues (God's attributes or divine providence), reviews its problematic dimensions, and tries to clarify it in the light of conceptual, textual, and other traditions. Systematic thought need not appear as a monograph and can also be conveyed in commentaries of previous sources. Usually, this thought is not found in biblical, tannaitic, and amoraic sources, or in the Apocrypha. The accepted assumption in the research literature is that, in the Jewish world, systematic thought began approximately in the tenth century with *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* by Saadia Gaon and in his surroundings.

What typifies Jewish thought? This question is far more complex than the previous one and, in attempting an answer, negative characteristics appear to be more useful than positive ones:

1) *Content* is not an unequivocal characteristic because, in many periods, the content of Jewish thought is largely a version of scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic conceptions prevalent in the Gentile surroundings. For example, the long description of the human soul and its powers in Part Five of *The Kuzari* by Judah Halevi (c. 1075–1141) relies on a treatise by the well-known Muslim philosopher ibn Sina. Yitzhak ibn Latif and Shem-Tov Falaquera (thirteenth century) integrated into their works (respectively, *Sha`ar ha-Shamayim* and *Moreh ha-Moreh*) translations of entire chapters from books by Abû Nasr al-Fârâbî. In the late Middle Ages, copies of many classic philosophical works become an integral component of Byzantine Jewish thought. More than a few scientific works are versions of classic scientific writings.
2) *Form*, meaning the conceptual exegesis of Jewish texts is not a defining feature either. Many canonic Jewish texts (for example, *Mekor Chayyim* by Shlomo ibn Gabirol and *The Guide of the Perplexed* by Maimonides, which deeply influenced medieval Christian thought) inspired commentaries by non-Jewish thinkers that did not become part of Jewish thought. My reference here is not only to ancient sources such as Scripture, which were interpreted by Christians as well. In the fourteenth century, Jews such as Moshe Narboni interpreted treatises by the Muslim philosophers Al-Ghazali and Averroes and, at the time of the *Haskalah*, Yitzhak Satanov wrote a sequential interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics* (1790).

3) *The thinker's identity* is not a criterion either. Jews wrote philosophical works that have no (direct or proven) connection to Judaism, while Jewish thinkers ceaselessly referred to works by non-Jewish thinkers. Works such as *Mekor Chayyim* by Shlomo ibn Gabirol, *A Treatise as to Necessary Existence* by Yosef ben Yehuda (twelfth century), many commentaries on Averroes's writings by Jewish thinkers (mainly in the fourteenth century, such as Gersonides, Yedayah ha-Penini, Moshe Narboni, and more), *Phaedo* by Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), and *The Logic of Pure Knowledge* by Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) could have been written by non-Jews.

One may cautiously argue that Jewish thought is characterized by at least *one* of two positive characteristics, as follows:

1) a special interpretation;
2) a context of reference.

The special interpretation characteristic splits into three—the first two absolute and always valid, and the third relative.

a) Jewish thought is characterized by references to canonic texts or to their contents.
b) References are characterized by an inner order (the determination of basic assumptions and coordinates, some cohesiveness, adherence to the flow of a specific text, and so forth).
c) Jewish thought is characterized by its acceptance of revelation as authoritative, by the texts it cites, and by a tradition of commands transmitted through it. The Oral Law is, to some extent, an interpretive key to this authority and, until the end of the eighteenth century, almost generally valid regarding rabbinic thought. Movements such as Karaism, Sabbateanism, and many individuals who were part of the early *Haskalah* movement rejected this principle, either partly or entirely.

Context has a dual meaning.

a) The first aspect is reference, either through discussion or through criticism, to the contemporary Jewish environment. For example, Abraham ibn Daud (twelfth century) attacked the book *Mekor Chayyim* because he held that it misleads the Jewish people. The works of Benedict

de Spinoza (1632–1677), and particularly the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, have been discussed as integral elements of modern Jewish thought and their pertinence to it, beyond their place in philosophy in general, cannot be ignored.

b) Continuity, meaning some reference to the work in later sources, also determines a link to the milieu. For example, Philo of Alexandria is indeed not a factor in medieval Jewish thought since he wrote in Greek, which most people at the time did not understand but, from the Renaissance onward, he enters the Jewish philosophical discourse.

Let us return to the interpretation characteristic. Philosophical interpretation is open and includes many options and modes of reading texts. A positive attempt to limit and narrow the definition of what constitutes Jewish thought could lead one to miss out on the wealth and dynamic of the conceptual reality. The location and mapping of philosophical elements, such as music, can also be interpreted in many and diverse ways and should therefore be approached with an open mind. The characteristics noted, as well as others, are discussed at length in works dealing with the history of Jewish thought.[1]

Music and the Definition of Jewish Thought

Most of the questions concerning Jewish thought in general are also pertinent to its components, such as music. Consider some of them:

1) Is it possible to define a particular conception of music in the thought of a Jewish philosopher or kabbalist as a "Jewish" conception?
2) Does music's influence on a Jewish thinker turn it into a "Jewish" component?
3) Does a random statement about music turn it into a component of a philosophical system?
4) Does a cultural-musical climate imply an influence on thought?

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1 See, for example, Eliezer Schweid, *Feeling and Speculation* (Ramat-Gan: Massada, 1980), 12–36 [Heb]; Raphael Jospe, *What Is Jewish Philosophy?* (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1988). Among the scholars who have set up comprehensive models of the history of Jewish philosophy, note Harry Austryn Wolfson, Isaac Husik, Julius Guttmann, and Colette Sirat. Similar problems are also evident in other religious philosophies. See, for example, C. F. J. Martin, *An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).

Some ethnomusicologists question the very definition of *Jewish music*, and here too opinions are divided on the nature of its connection to liturgical traditions (cantillation, liturgical poetry, cantorial music, and so forth) on the one hand, and to folk songs (which are often influenced by the Gentile surroundings) on the other, or only to one of them. My concern here is only the philosophical and mystical value of music.

An example will serve to illustrate these questions. The standing of music in the leisure culture of Muslim and Christian society in medieval Spain certainly influenced Jewish society, be it positively or negatively. Secular poetry was, to begin with, meant for the pleasure of listening. The text was less important in this poetry than in the *piyyut*, where most of the attention focused on the words, and the melody was secondary. By contrast, melodies in secular poems were highly significant, with the musical dimension playing a major role in the shaping of this poetry.[2] Does the standing of secular poetry in Jewish society turn music into an important cultural element for thinkers and intellectuals as well? Furthermore, Muslim views of music largely shaped the attitude toward it in medieval Jewish thought.[3] Does the adoption of the Muslim approach toward music and its reliance on Jewish sources make it "Jewish"?

One possible characteristic of Jewish thought is, as noted, a reference to religion or religious texts. Even if the Jewish thought is secular, Reform, national, or other, the context of the reference is religion (its rituals, symbols, texts, and so forth). As an element of Jewish thought, therefore, music cannot be entirely independent. This type of research differs from the historical study of musical and ethnomusical traditions, which includes comparative research (for example, Johann Sebastian Bach vis-à-vis Antonio Vivaldi and Heinrich Schütz), or an analysis of inspiration sources (such as the influence of the Turkish *makam* on the musical tradition of Jews in the Ottoman empire, which Edwin Seroussi studied in depth).[4] The study of the musical component in Jewish philosophy and mysticism must resort to the tools used in the research of Jewish thought.

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2 See, for example, Yehuda Ratzabi, "Traces of Meter in the Melodies of Sephardic *Piyyutim*," in *Piyyut in Tradition*, vol. 1, ed. Binyamin Bar-Tikva and Ephraim Hazan (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1996), 48 [Heb].

3 See, for example, Jean-Claude Chabrier, "Musical Science," in *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science*, vol. 2, ed. Roshdi Rashed (London: Routledge, 1996), 581–611; Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 45–67.

4 Edwin Seroussi, "The Turkish Makam in the Musical Culture of Ottoman Jews: Sources and Examples," *Israel Studies in Musicology* 5 (1990): 43–68.

When music appears in Jewish thought, even if it is highly appreciated and strives to be considered an independent factor, it is almost invariably related to religion or to religious texts. We have so far discussed the influence of music or its manifestation as a motif in the text. Can the opposite vector of influence be estimated, that is, the effect of the text on the music or its reflection in it? The connection between text and music interested Mordechai Breuer, who wrote on the study of Hasidic music, "We must consider the parallel and the correspondence between musical concepts and religious, psychological, and philosophical concepts. How are, for example, commitment, enthusiasm, mystery, effusiveness, and wonder, conveyed in Hasidic music?"[5] Abstract ideas have certainly contributed to musical composition no less than creative moods. The troublesome question is whether and to what extent can this contribution be estimated—can the musicologist and the philosopher meet midway?

In the present discussion on the role of the musical motif in Jewish thought, it is the textual element that largely determines the approaches and the topics of concern. The musical instruments mentioned in the sources, for example, are considered in various ways in Jewish thought, a theme discussed below. The lyre, the harp, the flute, the tambourine, and others reflect and symbolize various conceptual motifs, while other instruments are marginalized. Instruments directly identified with the Christian ritual are usually absent from Jewish thought or appear in negative contexts. To some extent, interpretations of these instruments' meaning attest to a philosophical approach, with the instruments serving only as illustrations. The musical discussion, however, may arise in contexts that, textually, are not distinctly sacred, such as the place of music in the order of the sciences. These issues are discussed at length in the book.

Interpretation

Tracing the evolvement of a motif within a philosophical context raises a series of hermeneutical questions. These questions become even more significant when the connection to the text is dominant. The discussion below seeks to clarify several hermeneutical dimensions that emerge from the musical aspect of Jewish thought. In the context of the hermeneutical discussion, I will also address the phenomenological framework of this book.

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5 Mordechai Breuer, "Problems and Approaches to the Study of Hasidic Music," *Dukhan* 4 (1963): 45 [Heb].

From the Component to the Flow

The standing and meaning of music have occupied many scholars of hermeneutics. Umberto Eco pointed out that music is a semiotic system, that is, a series of symbols that have a syntax. Its standing, however, is complex and problematic. On the one hand, music denotes a system of symbols without meaning or content, and on the other, music has "signs" with a clear denotation, such as trumpet blows in the army.[6] Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) discussed musical performance. In the preface to the second edition of *Truth and Method*, he notes that, although interpretation takes many forms in varied areas, he tends to view it as an approach to the study of culture that is marked by systematic uniform features. Gadamer notes that musical performance, which is an interpretation of a specific musical score, differs from the interpretation of a visual work or of poetry.[7] Other scholars discuss the role of performance in the shaping of the work per se,[8] an issue that is more pronounced in Eastern Sephardic music and *piyyut* where improvisation is a key element. A musical performance is the hermeneutical product of a culture and I claim that the musical element in abstract thought, when present, is also a hermeneutical product. In other words, the thinker's use of the musical motif to convey an idea is a perception of music as a hermeneutical act.

The analysis of the musical component in Jewish thought confronts us with the hermeneutical circle problem. To understand the place of the musical component, we must understand the entire philosophical context. The component, however, is one of its building blocks, and understanding the context is contingent on understanding its elements. The hermeneutical circle does indeed increase the importance of studying the musical element when attempting to understand the philosophical and mystical situation. Since this element is often symbolic (music represents various conceptual elements) or instrumental (helpful for concentration, for commitment to the spiritual world, and so forth), it cannot be detached from the context.

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6 Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), 10–11, 88.

7 Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 343. Poetry itself has a musical dimension. See Hillel Barzel, *New Interpretations of Literary Text: From Theory to Method* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 69 [Heb]. See also Ezra Fleischer's reference to Judah Halevi's poetry (see below, 27).

8 See, for example, Thomas Carson Mark, "On Works of Virtuosity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 28–45.

The hermeneutical circle notion is particularly important for an element that, though not central, does appear in various systems of thought. Music was often on the margins of Jewish thought. My perspective on thought, therefore, is internal. The musical motif, rather than as an element external to philosophical thought, is examined within it and from it. Studying this motif, therefore, adds to the understanding of philosophical and mystical circumstances in Jewish thought.

Music, moreover, has always been a trait of human culture—be it as a religious feature, as a functional one (fulfilling medical, utilitarian, or other needs), or as a characteristic of "secular" leisure patterns. Music is an element in the milieu. A cultural-hermeneutical-cultural note is required here. Since the separation between thinkers and their cultural milieu is problematic and even artificial, the musical component serves as an expression and a reflection of individuals as products and interpreters of their surroundings. Analysis of the musical element can thus explain the thought in general.

In a way, my starting point is reminiscent of avant-garde theory—I assume that music reflects practical life. The literary critic Peter Bürger presented a historical typology of art that split it into sacral art, courtly art, and bourgeois art (which is the "objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class").[9] The avant-garde criticized art's distance from praxis in bourgeois society,[10] and some avant-garde theorists tried to establish a new praxis based on art. I argue that the historical manifestations of the musical component in abstract thought also function as (indeed modest) shapers of a philosophical environment. My claim is the following:

1) music reflects practical life and molds it;
2) thought reflects practical life and molds it;
3) music is a specific component of thought;
   therefore:
4) the musical component in thought reflects practical life and molds it.

A claim that can justifiably be raised in this context is that applying this argument to Jewish thought is problematic because music is usually not one of its key components. According to the principles of structuralist hermeneutics, however, even components that are not dominant mark the option of an inner alternative reading of the text.

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9 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 47.

10 Ibid., 49.

Tracing the course of the philosophical and musical components of consciousness over time reflects an assumption about the text as containing inner meanings and dynamics that are conveyed through these components. I assume that an analysis of this component's progression brings to the surface the text's inner dimensions. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) saw illusions as expressing the "truth" of the patient's personality. Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) delved into the history of philosophy because he held that ideas reveal the non-authentic dimension of existence.[11] The clarification of this dimension helps to expose the authenticity of existence. Tracing the course of the musical motif, then, largely reflects the conceptual leanings of Jewish thought or, in other words, its "truth" or "truths." Hence, an element that is not central but derives from its inner fabric, may reveal the authentic character of Jewish thought.

This type of approach is also evident in the hermeneutical techniques used in Jewish esoteric literature, which flourished in the Middle Ages. The writing style imbued with double and hidden messages reflects the communication pattern widespread in religious thought from the beginning of the twelfth century onward. Several thinkers tried to locate the mystery hiding in the text in random allusions. One example of this approach is the handling of Creation in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides devoted about thirty consecutive chapters to Creation in Part Two, while many students and commentators sought Maimonides' authentic view in casual mentions of Creation in other chapters of *The Guide*.[12] Similarly, although the musical component is often on the margins of philosophical consciousness, it could point to its general course and its dynamic.

Two Layers

Jewish thought itself is formulated at times as a philosophical or mystical interpretation of certain sources. In the musical realm, we encounter paradigms of biblical figures (such as Jubal, King David, and Samuel),[13] and Jewish thought

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11 William B. Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 135.

12 On such an interpretation in the fourteenth century, see Dov Schwartz, *The Philosophy of a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Neoplatonic Circle* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1996), 82–83 [Heb].

13 According to I Chronicles 9:22, David and Samuel arranged the Levites' gate-keeping. See, for example, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, vol. 12 (New Haven, CO: Yale University Press, 1957), Laws Concerning Vessels of the Sanctuary and Those Who Minister Therein, 3:9.

offers an interpretation of their musical associations. Texts such as the Book of Psalms and Song of Songs were perceived as a platform for musical performance. Exegetes of Song of Songs did at times focus on the poetry without addressing the musical side. One example is the discussion of the well-known biblical exegete Meir Leibush Wisser, known as Malbim (1809–1879), in *He-Harash ve-ha-Masger* ("the craftsman and the smith," a phrase from II Kings 24:14), an excursus he added to his commentary on Song of Songs. But the Book of Psalms, which mentions many musical instruments and whose chapters are called *mizmorim* (from the Hebrew root *z-m-r*, meaning "song," "to sing"), compelled many commentators to address the musical dimension.[14] Musical figures or instruments (trumpet, lyre, timbrels, harp, pipe, horn, and drums) that, as noted above, are associated with music in the Bible, have been the object of lively commentary. Batya Bayer, an expert in ancient musicology, notes: "How rich is Scripture in musical testimonies, that is, in descriptions of various sound experiences, each one and its special terms."[15]

Besides biblical literature, talmudic and midrashic literature used music extensively as a metaphor, describing divine revelation and its expressions in terms of song and melody.[16] Just as many biblical sources were the basis for later commentaries, a series of talmudic aggadot became sources for commentary and for the development of the conceptual component. The philosophical and kabbalistic interpretation of Aggadah evoked great interest in Jewish thought over generations. One example is the widespread series of aggadot relating to the lyre, the instrument most often mentioned in Scripture. Symbolic meanings have long been pinned on musical instruments according to their sounds

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Since the Levites' task is to sing, Samuel is also mentioned regarding music. The issue of the Levites' singing and the divisions were tied together in BT Ta`anit 27b, and appears explicitly in Midrash Tanchuma: "Let our master instruct us: How many strings were on the harp which the Levites played? . . . And who ordained them? Samuel and David. It is so stated (in I Chronicles 9:22) "David and Samuel the Seer ordained them in their office of trust." Moreover, they were the ones who set up the divisions for singing. Now the Levites would stand on their platform and sing before the one who spoke for the world to come into being." *Midrash Tanhuma*, vol. 3, trans. John T. Townsend (Jersey City, NY: Ktav, 2003), *Beha`alotkha* 3.12, 79, and, similarly, Numbers Rabba 15:11. Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari* mentions King David and Samuel together as having dealt with music. See below, 100 and ff.

14 See, at length, Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadia Gaon to Abraham ibn Ezra*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), index, under "music, musicology."

15 Batya Bayer, "Including Religious Music in the Teaching of Jewish Subjects and the Humanities," *Dukhan* 2 (1961): 36 [Heb].

16 See, at length, Jacob Neusner, *Judaism's Theological Voice: The Melody of the Talmud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). On Neusner's approach, see below, 228–233.