
Friday Live and One Shabbat Morning

Support Material and other Junk that may be helpful in creating and sustaining prayer experiences.

Developed and Edited by Craig Taubman

Overview

When I was a child at summer camp, each morning we would have prayer services. We set up benches around a beautiful, shady tree. The services were among the most beautiful and inspiring I had ever experienced. When I returned home from camp, the synagogue seemed sterile by comparison to the joy we felt at camp. I could not understand how the same prayers had lost so much.

Some of that loss was the informality and ease of everyone waking each morning to do the same thing -- no dressing up, no tussles with family walking out the door. But part of it was the attention to melodies we could all sing, which lifted both our spirits and our voices.

This book takes me back to those moments at camp. Once again I hear melodies that I too can sing, that express the beauty and inspiration of Jewish prayer. Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz said: "When one is singing and cannot lift his voice, and another comes and sings as well, another who can lift his voice, then the first will be able to lift his voice as well. That is the secret of the bond between spirit and spirit".

In these notes is some of that secret. It is the secret I learned years ago as we sat around that tree, praying together, in the damp summer morning. It is a secret Jews have shared for thousands of years. It is the secret we share with God.

RABBI DAVID WOLPE

When Rabbi Wolpe approached me to join him in creating the *Friday Night Live* monthly service I was skeptical. Would we really be able to create a warm, inviting community on Friday Nights for young adults? Clearly the answer to that question is yes. It is hard to explain the intensity of 2,000 people singing and swaying, dancing and praying...it is very powerful, it is awesome and you really should stop by if you are in town. But even more significant to me is how the service has impacted my life, my work and my spirit. *Friday Night Live* is something I look forward to every month. I hope that you will find some of that same joy from creating your own services, allowing you and your community a chance to grow together in song, prayer and Torah.

Finally, the arrangements and music found in the Friday Night Live service are arrangements and nothing more. They are not holy, they are not unbendable... they are meant to be used. Please feel free to adapt the arrangements to suit your congregation, your school or your own personal style. If you don't have a cantor accompaniment or a choir, don't worry. You can and should tailor the music to fit your needs.

Good luck and let us know what works for you.

CRAIG TAUBMAN

16 Ideas that Actually Work

1. Develop a “greeting group” that is responsible to welcome people as they arrive at services as well as assist during the service. This group will be the core of your community and set the spirit and tone of the service. Urge them to be gracious, say *Shabbat Shalom*, assist with page numbers and in general help people feel comfortable and welcome. Meet "the congregation" outside prior to the service. Introduce yourself by name and if possible introduce them to someone else nearby.
2. Many, Jews don't speak Hebrew! Design, and use a transliteration book along with your *siddur*.
3. My Aunt Ruth used to say that God gave us two ears and one mouth so that we would listen twice as much as we speak. This is a good rule of thumb for the service as well. Keep talking down to a minimum.
4. Start on time.
5. Make the service special and unique to your congregation. We dance during our Friday Night Live services because people want to dance. Create your group's own unique expression.
6. Wear comfortable clothes that make you feel comfortable. If possible, come home from work early so that you are relaxed and prepared for this holy event and special day.
7. Create quiet, private *davening* moments to compliment the group singing.
8. Be a good role model. Sing, clap, *daven*, dance. Do whatever it is that makes you feel good.
9. Be spontaneous! The guys in the band often say, “I never do the same thing once”. While repetition is comfortable, change is an exciting and a necessary part of the prayer experience. Carefully choose a balance between the “set” and the “spontaneous” parts of your service.
10. During the service walk through the congregation and among your congregants. When possible, stand in the middle of the hall and have everyone face the center of the room.
11. Memorize and use these three wonderful words.... “Please” and “thank you”.
12. Plan the unexpected and expect the unplanned. For example, you choose the wrong key, break a string or the sound system goes out, use these as opportunities to celebrate the moment. It is when you are caught off guard and choose to think on your feet that you capture the energy and make the moment. There is nothing bad about things that are wrong. They are just not going the way you had planned. All it takes to make it "right" is a good attitude and knowing the orientation of your group. Be confident enough to know that you can (and will) make mistakes.
13. Prepare; know the text, the chords, the arrangement, the melody, the mood, the translation and your congregation. And know that even though you know all this there is still more to know.
14. Location, Location, Location. Create a warm environment, move chairs in close, dim the lights, set the heat or air conditioning to a comfortable level, move down from the *bimah* to the use one small podium for the rabbi and cantor. Treat your synagogue environment like you would your home.
15. Keep your announcements short and if possible eliminate them altogether. By doing this you have made a keen distinction between the sacred service and the mundane everyday announcements.
16. Enjoy, smile, laugh and be present in the moment...have a *Shabbat Shalom*.

Principles of One Shabbat Morning

Worship services are a chance to celebrate life and confront our vulnerabilities with a community that supports us in good times and bad. Prayer is a chance to grow spiritually, a chance to come into contact with the source of our higher selves, a chance to connect with God.

American Jews know how to think, but they don't always know how to pray. To pray means to relinquish control. It means to reveal your innermost thoughts and emotions, allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Worshippers want to pray, but they don't want to go to school to learn how to do it. We need to engage them in ways that open the meaning and emotion of the prayers to them without being analytical and didactic. Here are our responses to some common concerns:

“I can't get into prayers because I don't know Hebrew.”

Many (if not most) worshippers are not familiar with the prayer book and *davening*—praying. It is imperative that the texts of all songs and prayers be provided in Hebrew, transliteration and translation. Worship is a right brain activity. Music is a right brain activity. The worship service needs to be filled with music and drama. In addition to reading texts aloud, consider chanting the text repeatedly in Hebrew or English, or presenting texts as a choral reading or dramatic presentation.

“Everything is so slow and static.”

The service needs to have highs and lows, fast pacing alternating with slow pacing. People need time to celebrate and to meditate. This has to be planned consciously to work. Worshippers can and will gladly listen to set “performance” pieces, but they need to be spread out during the service. Even then, don't have too many of them, and when possible choose material that has a refrain that people can sing along with. Perhaps the most significant addition to our service is the use of instruments, which has helped us add a new excitement to the service. Often, with the help of the instruments, we can dance in the middle of the service for up to 10-15 minutes.

“I don't know the melodies.”

Our philosophy is “do *more* of *less*.” By repeating material numerous times there is a point in the process where a congregant can begin to develop a comfort level and sing along. The Hassidic style of repeating a melody over and over releases us from the confines of rationality and allows our creative-emotional side to come into play.

“I don't know how to pray.”

Worshippers like to know something about the prayers, their historical content and context. Create moments in the prayer experience to teach about prayer. The learning component of the service is vital to its success, for both the newcomers and the veterans. We teach something new every service so there is at least one communal learning experience. For those who are interested in more intensive study, consider offering a class immediately prior to the service.

“I don't get anything out of praying.”

Telling a personal story describing how a prayer affects you is emotional and can help give the worshippers a model of how to approach prayer. If the leaders of the service allow themselves to be vulnerable and admit to their own difficulties with prayer, it helps the congregation to do the same. This is a first step to real prayer.

“I can't find God when I pray.”

Perhaps the worshipper doesn't know what they are looking for? Give worshippers an opportunity to be part of the service and they will be much more inclined to get something out of the service. We have made One Shabbat Morning shakers that are distributed at each service. We have also made a point of inviting congregants to share original poems, stories and songs in the body of the service. People love to be involved. We have developed the "journey" section of our service as an attempt to make the service more relevant and personal, inviting individuals to share a piece of their life story with the community. Often people are empowered when they hear the personal struggles and triumphs of members of their community.

“Prayer is not relevant to anything going on in my life.”

One of the highlights of the one Shabbat Morning is the “Journey” This is a 5-8 minute time set aside for someone in the congregation to share a piece of their personal Journey with the community. We do it during the *Musaf* section of the service, traditionally set aside as the time for the “additional Shabbat offering in Temple times”. This section is a personal favorite of many in attendance and a great way of creating community in your congregations. Please note, it is critical that someone review the content of the Journey so that the speaker has input from a third party.

“The service is too long.”

This is a common complaint with a very simple solution. Make the service shorter. Our service begins at 10:00 A.M. and is preceded by a class and some food to nosh on. (Nosh and Drash”) We try to finish services no later than 12:00 P.M., whereupon everyone participates in a community meal.

“My kids can't sit still.”

One Shabbat Morning welcomes the entire family but it is not a “family service.” It is a two hour service that requires focus and participation, two qualities that are foreign to most children under the age of 9 or 10. We provide free, top notch childcare for those who need it and strongly urge families to take advantage of the program. Toward the end of the service we invite the childcare participants back into the service for the concluding songs.

“All the tunes sound so old fashioned.” or

“When I go to modern services it doesn't sound Jewish to me.”

One of our primary goals of our service is to build bridges between tradition and modernity. Working closely with Cantors, Rabbis, artists and congregants, our goal is to create a liturgy that bridges the past (nusach) with the present, (contemporary melodies) creating a model for the future.

Additional Thoughts

1. ***Prayer is personal and intimate.*** After every service we solicit and evaluate the suggestions of our service participants. Every month we try to incorporate these suggestions into our service. The service becomes a balance between *Keva* (fixed prayer, in time and language) and *Kavanah* (a meaningful prayer experience).
2. ***Prayer is art.*** Before every service the leaders and band get together to practice and rehearse new material. We come to each service prepared to do our best.
3. ***Prayer in a community is business.*** To reach out and build a community is hard work. The publicity is top notch. The outreach is classy. The connection is personal. Every communication is done with integrity and sensitivity. Before each service we make phone calls, send emails, and mail postcards to friends and congregants, inviting them to services.
4. ***Attention to detail.*** How are the chairs set up? Sound? Food? Translations? Meeters and greeters? *Siddurim*? Shakers? Lighting? Room temperature? We look at each service as an opportunity to create a holy moment and a sacred space. While having exceptionally high expectations, we take nothing for granted.
5. ***Feedback*** Develop and utilize a questionnaire that explores how your congregation is reacting to the service. After every service we solicit the feedback of our participants, evaluating their suggestions and incorporating their ideas into the service. The service becomes a balance between *Keva* (fixed prayer, in time and language) and *Kavanah* (a meaningful prayer experience).
6. ***Community*** Building community is what a Beit Knesset (House of Gathering) is all about. Take the time to do this by inviting new people to plan and participate in the service. This can include making the Kiddush lunch, decorating the prayer space, speaking, holding the Torah, writing, singing dancing or sharing any aspect of their personality and profession with the congregation. Do it and you will grow and prosper...don't and you will continue to draw from the same well over and over.
7. In conclusion, attention to detail and a passionate desire to make the service work is the key to any services success. Are the chairs set up? How is the room temperature and lighting? Is the sound balanced? Is there enough food? Are there greeters? Have you called people and invited them to the service? We look at each service as an opportunity to create a holy moment. While having exceptionally high expectations, we take nothing for granted. Every month, the clergy, lay and professional leaders are invited to a study session on prayer. While the meeting is often difficult to fit into our schedules, everyone in attendance agrees that it is one of the highlights of the month.

We wish you much success in this spiritual journey and look forward to hearing your feedback. Please write us with any comments or suggestion at craignco@aol.com

Craig Taubman

Articles

Friday Night Live' Draws Young Jews to Their Faith

By Angela Aleiss © Religion News Service

LOS ANGELES -- "Please put your hands above your head. Let us know that you're here," says musical director Craig Taubman to a crowd of young Jewish adults at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles.

Taubman and his band are leading the congregation in the hand-clapping melody of "Romemu," a Jewish song praising God. Inside Sinai's block-long sanctuary, young adult Jews -- mostly from 25 to 40 years old -- congregate for "Friday Night Live," a monthly Shabbat service that combines folk and contemporary music with spirituality, dancing and sermons. Every second Friday of the month, the Conservative synagogue draws nearly 2,000 Jews from Los Angeles and the surrounding Ventura, Orange and San Diego counties. Some even fly in from Tucson, Ariz., and San Francisco.

The band breaks into the quick tempo of "Adonai S'fatai," and a group of people link hands and dance through the aisles. "Everybody who's dancing grab one person," says Taubman, his voice barely audible above the music and singing.

Following the service, Sinai Temple becomes a traditional Beit K'nesset, the Hebrew term for "house of gathering." Young adults participate in a variety of activities, including Israeli folk dancing, a light supper, study and socializing. But there is something larger happening at Sinai Temple. Friday Night Live is a not-so-subtle attempt to reconnect Jewish Generation X with its lost sense of faith, and to encourage single Jews to find a Jewish mate and stem the rising tide of Jewish intermarriage.

"It's a happening," Taubman, 41, later explained of Friday Night Live. Taubman, who plays the guitar for Friday Night Live with his band of five to seven musicians, combines Middle Eastern, klezmer and Hebrew melodies into the liturgy. The group typically welcomes the Shabbat bride with a jazzy New Orleans tempo of "L'cha Dodi." "Praying in our community is not a spectator sport. There's some magical combination of spirit and forces that compels people to come again and again," Taubman said.

People have been coming to Friday Night Live since 1998, when Taubman and David Wolpe, Sinai's senior rabbi, first talked about the idea over lunch. "His vision was (a service) for young adults. He was so passionate about it. He really wanted it to happen," recalled Taubman. And happen it did. With the initial support of \$10,000 from the Jewish Community Foundation and other private donations, the first Friday Night Live drew nearly 400 people. That number has since doubled several times over, making Friday Night Live the most popular Jewish singles event on the West Coast.

"I knew that young people needed this," said Wolpe, 41, as he relaxed in his office. "I was 100 percent sure that (Friday Night Live) would succeed because I really believed there was a spiritual hunger." Tall and slender, Wolpe is a native of Philadelphia and a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He is also a popular lecturer and prolific writer and has authored five books, including "Making Loss Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times" (1999). His mixture of quick wit and youthful charisma are the perfect ingredients to draw young Jews to their faith. "The largest population are come-backers," Wolpe explained of the young adult Jews who have lost touch with a synagogue community. "I wanted to show them that (attending Shabbat services) is a first step and not a last one."

That first step is one of Friday Night Live's main selling points: It's a great venue for young Jews to meet and hopefully marry other Jews. That's a primary concern for a religion in which the tradition is passed from the mother to the children. "Judaism is numerically imperiled and Christianity isn't," Wolpe said of the tendency toward Jewish/non-Jewish intermarriage, which worries many of today's Jewish leaders. Events like Friday Night Live seem to be a deliberate move to counter that trend. "If we can get marriage out of them, that is a success," Wolpe said.

For many Jews -- single or married -- Friday Night Live builds on a common faith and encourages them to rediscover their spirituality. "It's like an awakening for these people. It lets them know that synagogue doesn't have to be boring," said Andrea Corsun. Corsun, 35, a Los Angeles dentist, regularly attends Friday Night Live with her husband, Danny.

"You get an incredible experience from it. If we can go as a married couple and feel good about it, then it's clearly not (only) a singles scene," she said. One of Friday Night Live's main attractions is Wolpe's brief, inspirational sermon or "teaching." Typically, he flavors his talks with references to Jewish tradition and anecdotes about popular culture. ("If you can't manage to be out of touch with your cell phones and beepers for two hours," he once said during his sermon, "then you really need to be here.")

During the service, Wolpe might stroll among the congregants, singing and keeping time with the music. "It's very rare for a rabbi or cantor to walk and dance in the aisles," he said. The community participation, folk music and range of activities at Friday Night Live have prompted some religion scholars to draw a parallel to contemporary Christian churches.

"I do think there is some attempt to mimic what evangelical Christians have done. It (Friday Night Live) is very much a movement from cerebral religion to a more gut-felt religion," said Wade Clark Roof, who chairs the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Roof is the author of eight books, including the recent "Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion."

"The diversity of interest groups (meeting after worship) is similar to what you find in many seeker churches," Roof said. "The notion of options and choice is very deeply rooted in contemporary religion and culture." Wolpe agreed. "That (the Christian evangelical movement) has been one of several influences that has helped create this experience," he said. But he pointed out that Friday Night Live also attempts to recollect the early adolescent camping experience in the Jewish community.

"We don't live in a Jewish society. But in camp, we do. It's a very powerful experience for those who go there," he said. "That's what we're trying to recapture: the informality, spontaneity and joy."

Sing a New Song

An emerging American liturgy is energizing services around the city.

By Julie Gruenbaum Fax

Craig Taubman remembers a time not too long ago when he and other popular Jewish musicians were branded as destroyers of Jewish culture.

"Years ago there was incredible tension. You can't ignore it," Taubman told *The Journal* from his Studio City home and office. "There were inflammatory, not nice things said about a lot of contemporary writers. It was said that so-and-so or such-and-such had single-handedly not only destroyed Jewish music, but was destroying Jewish culture and Jewish prayer." That antagonism, it seems, is on the way out, just as more and more of Taubman's music, along with the works of Debbie Friedman and other songwriters, becomes a more formalized part of services.

Aside from collaborating with cantors at Sinai Temple and Adat Ari El to develop new Shabbat services, Taubman this year is entering one of the strongest holdouts for traditional cantorial music: The main sanctuary on the High Holy Days. Together with Cantor Joseph Gole at Sinai Temple in Westwood, Taubman has created an arrangement that combines a chorus of Psalms with trumpets and dramatically placed organ chords, interwoven with the Shofar blasts, for what Taubman hopes will be an inspirational and participatory shofar blowing service.

"The text says be stirred to life, it doesn't say sit quietly and passively, it says be moved. And hopefully they'll be moved," Taubman says. "But at the same time, we're not totally taking it out with rock music and guitars and other things that will be more focused on the setting of the music, rather than the text and the moment." Achieving that balance of the familiar and the innovative, of the traditional and the contemporary, is one of the greatest challenges of cantors and musicians today, as many observers believe we are witnessing the solidification of a uniquely American mode of prayer.

It is a mode that diminishes the performance/ audience aspect of prayer and emphasizes participation with accessible words and singable melodies. It is energetic and melodic and can cover the gamut of emotions in an effort to bring about spiritual connection. And it is influenced not only by the long historical chain of cantorial traditions, but by the great cantorial composers of the 20th century, the song leaders groomed at summer camp, American folk rock and the Chassidic melodies of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. While no one is claiming the advent of a great revolution on the American Jewish music scene, it seems that after 25 to 30 years of development, we are at a discernible point in an evolutionary process where American Jewish liturgical music is coming into its own.

"It's a very natural kind of evolution. For the people who are involved in trying to change things, it is very challenging and also exciting," says Cantor Ira Bigeleisen of Adat Ari El in North Hollywood. "Eventually, American Jewry will grow up and find its own voice, just as German Jewry grew up and found its own voice. It happens with every community after a couple hundred years, where it gets established enough and develops its style." The success of the emerging style is hard to deny, and cantors are meeting the challenge with a healthy hesitancy, working to assure that the centuries-old traditions do not get lost in the wave of creativity and artistic freedom. With the right melding of old and new, Bigeleisen believes the 21st century American contribution to the cantorate can be long lasting.

"My opinion is that we're having a resurgence of what I call liturgical poetry," says Bigeleisen, pointing out other centuries in Jewish history where prayer compositions proliferated. "This is an American style of liturgical poetry, so instead of being in Aramaic, the common language at that time, now we have poetry in Hebrew and in English, adapting to the musical style that is common here. It's a way of integrating and modernizing the service while still maintaining a traditional structure. And I think this is really positive." One reason Bigeleisen and others are so enthusiastic is that the new style is attracting unprecedented hundreds to services. Friday Night Live at Sinai Temple and One Shabbat Morning at Adat Ari El are nationally acclaimed illustrations of the fusion of popular music with Jewish prayer.

Taubman, Bigeleisen and Rabbi Moshe Rothblum set out to structure One Shabbat Morning, the Conservative synagogue's monthly service, to engage congregants through interactive Torah discussions, an air of intimacy, and music that is contemporary but based on traditional Shabbat nusach. (Nusach, musical modes based on melodic formulas of chanted prayer particular to a time of the year, time of day and specific sections of the service, is among the oldest layers of extant Jewish liturgical music.)

Taubman worked with Bigeleisen and other cantors including Alberto Mizrahi, a renowned Sephardic cantor from Chicago, to shore up his knowledge of nusach. Together, they came out with a service that attracts as many as 1,000 people, of all ages and levels of affiliation. They even snagged the hard-to-reach teenagers. Taubman is convinced the success is due to the newfound cooperation, where the parties — rabbi, cantor, musician — have taken joint ownership of the process. "The likelihood of a song of mine becoming part of the tradition a hundred years from now is highly unlikely. But if I can make one contribution that will possibly be invaluable, it is getting rabbis and cantors and lay people and musicians such as myself to sit at the table and say, 'OK, instead of creating this stuff independently, how can we work together toward creating a liturgy that speaks to people?'" Taubman says. What they have created so far does speak to people.

"I think people want to be engaged," says Ron Wolfson, director of the University of Judaism's Whizin Center for the Jewish Future and cofounder of Synagogue 2000, an interdenominational project. "The question for the rabbi and the cantor and the lay leadership is, how are we going to create a service that engages people in prayer, in study and community?" Part of what makes Taubman's and Friedman's music so accessible is that it combines Hebrew and English, a must for a Jewish laity that has a diminishing knowledge base. "It seems that we in the Conservative and Reform world are confronted with a generation that wants us to create a service they can somehow relate to, although they come to it without a basic ability to experience it in an authentic Jewish way," says Cantor Joseph Gole at Sinai Temple.

Thus, more wordless melodies have been added, and some congregations, such as Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel, have increased the availability of transliterated texts and started prayer education classes. "There are lots of ways to bring people in so they don't feel alienated, without dumbing down the service," says Cantor Evan Kent of Temple Isaiah in West Los Angeles, who is also the newly appointed director of the cantorial program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. "There is a healthy balance to making service accessible, but not making it ridiculously easy so regulars feel insulted." Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom, who has helped to guide the evolution of a more participatory service at Temple Israel of Hollywood for 26 years, believes that people want to take ownership of their prayers. "I think people are looking for a more personal experience in worship. They want to be moved and they want to be touched, and they want to do it — they don't just want to have the clergy do it for them," she says. "I think this is linked to the change in the concept of God that people are comfortable with. People are more comfortable with an imminent God, with a God that is close to them and touching there lives, and they are less comfortable with a transcendent God who is controlling things from on high and judging. I think they want that closeness and intimacy to be felt in the music, with songs that will touch the heart more directly and immediately." That desire for intimacy arose within a generation whose Jewish experiences and musical tastes were nourished largely in summer camp or youth groups, and largely on the musical styles of Taubman and Friedman.

Today, that generation is in a position to institute their musical and theological predilections in a formal way. "The synagogue presidents and the rabbis and the cantors grew up at camp with me — we all went through that experience," says Taubman. "We are experiencing the effects of the '60s revolution decades later in the context of our prayer and our synagogue environment." According to Mark Kligman, an ethnomusicologist at HUC-JIR in New York, the change is also the product of a generational shift. "The American Jews of the '70s tried to define and assert themselves, and they did so by saying they did not want to sound like their parents' generation. They didn't want their cantors wailing and crying and emoting as they did in earlier generations," Kligman says. "Those changes have been felt most significantly since the mid-'70s, and certainly those issues were in the fore during the '80s and became more institutionalized in the '90s." Some in the synagogue music business express concern that the innovations don't overwhelm the quality of the prayers.

"Unless there is somebody maintaining a certain level of standards, the heritage will be endangered," says Sam Glaser, composer and performer who leads services at the Happy Minyan and Young Israel of Century City. "We want to give kids synagogue memories, but we also want them to have the option of showing up in a synagogue in Romania or Mexico City and being able to daven with the nusach, and not to have an alien tune because the Debbie Friedman tune is the only one they ever learned." That is a challenge cantorial schools are taking seriously. Kent says that a significant amount of each class and music workshop will be dedicated to melding tradition with contemporary music when HUC's expanded cantorial program opens its doors in spring 2002. The school will open as a preparatory program for students waiting to enter the cantorate, and Kent says Los Angeles' Reform seminary hopes to have a fully investing program in the near future. "One of the most important things in training students is teaching them to evaluate criteria for what is good," Kent says. Kent notes that today's cantorial students are being trained by cantors who are not only themselves American trained, but whose teachers were also American trained. As the link to the European tradition grows more abstract, the American tradition has more room to flourish.

"We are really creating a Nusach America, which has to reflect everything that we know as Americans," Kent says. Cantor Nathan Lam of Stephen S. Wise Temple, who heads the Academy for Jewish Religion's cantorial school, says students must have a firm grounding in tradition before they can innovate. "I think the new cantorate is being taught to make the amcha [people] one with the prayers. The text is priority and belief in God is priority, and make them the center of your focus," Lam says. Lam also points out that changes in the tradition of change and absorption of outside influence in the cantorate is a well-documented part of Jewish musical history. To illustrate his point, Lam sings the second half of "Aleinu," beginning with "Shehu Noteh Shamayim" (He who plants the heavens). He then launches into a rendition of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider." The tunes are nearly identical. It is a vivid illustration that Jewish music and the music of the surrounding culture have always existed in intricate interplay. Most of the nusach is undocumented in origin, but dates far back in Jewish history, as does cantillation of the biblical texts. In contrast, many of the High Holy Day melodies we hear today were written in the last 200 years in Central and Eastern Europe, when the post-Enlightenment cantorate experienced an age of prolific artistry, influenced by the musical culture surrounding it. Strains of classical influence can be heard in many traditional melodies. Kligman, the ethnomusicologist from New York, says that while comparisons of cultural influence can certainly be made with today's musical resurgence, the analogy must be nuanced.

"Today our society in general has moved away from classical music ... Everything needs to be user-friendly and needs to be very appealing and functional," Kligman says. So while composers such as Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski, cantorial giants who lived in Central Europe in the 19th century, may have sought aesthetic and artistic excellence in their compositions, today's composers have a different goal. "Debbie Friedman's reference is not classical music, she is not writing to people's intellectual center. Her music is about communicating to God, to help make prayers understood in a folk music idiom," Kligman says. Perhaps it is the cantorate's malleable nature that has left it so open to

innovation. "When someone asks me, 'Is this traditional?' I say, 'Whose tradition?'" Kent says. "I think in a multicultural Jewish city like Los Angeles, we have to be very cognizant of the fact that what is your tradition is not necessarily someone else's." That is especially true when Kent looks out at his Westside congregation and sees non-Jews sitting with their Jewish partners, and sees a good number of congregants who are Israeli or Persian. "The Eastern European tradition means nothing to them," he says.

In Temple Isaiah's High Holy Day services, which take place at the Century Plaza, Kent includes in his services Yiddish songs, Moroccan tunes, a fair amount of English, silent meditations and wordless melodies. While in most synagogues the High Holy Day services remain largely unchanged, many cantors and rabbis are slowly introducing new melodies. "Especially on the High Holy Days, people have real expectation that they will hear the same pieces," Bigeleisen says. "I don't change more than one or two pieces a year." Lam says he will begin the service with a niggun, to get people more in the mood to participate, and will add some contemporary music to the Torah procession service. Rosenbloom at Temple Israel will do the same thing. She believes that the reluctance to change the High Holy Day service, while related to nostalgia, also goes back to people's perception of God. "Much more than on Shabbat, we are talking about a royal concept of God, a queenly or kingly concept of God, and the music and the majesty of the music reflects the theology that is behind the prayers," Rosenbloom says. Temple Israel, like many other large synagogues, offers several alternative services, including one that is less embellished than the main sanctuary. At Sinai Temple for the past few years, Craig Taubman has joined forces with Rabbi Sherre Zwelling Hirsch to create an alternative High Holy Day service that attracts about 1,000 worshipers. Like the new Shabbat services, this one aims for intimacy, more interactive Torah study, and contemporary, participatory music accompanied by a band.

"People come and they can't believe it. They have these expectations that during the High Holy Days you're supposed to be bored and sit through it and endure and be hungry. People are transformed....There is excitement and energy," Hirsch says. Even more remarkable, she says, is that people come back on regular Shabbats and other holidays. "They are no longer once-a-year Jews," she says. Taubman says it's an important lesson for other synagogues to absorb. "Congregations get 5,000 people coming on the High Holy Days, and then they don't come back for 50 weeks," Taubman says. "Something tells me that anybody in marketing would say here is a golden opportunity not to do the same old same old, try something new, and see if they might actually come back."

Craig Taubman

Craig Taubman's dynamic music and moving performance style have been an inspiration to the Jewish community for over 20 years. Craig's magical and enchanting music brings to life the joy and spirit of the Jewish heritage, appealing to young and old alike and captivating audiences wherever he goes.

Craig first began performing at the age of 15 when he was encouraged by a counselor at Camp Ramah in Ojai, California to take hold of a guitar and lead services. His interest in music became interwoven with his passion for Jewish history and culture.

Combining Hebrew and English lyrics, Craig's songs bridge traditional Jewish themes and ancient teachings with passages and experiences of contemporary Jewish life. He speaks a language that is both comfortable and acceptable to children and adults. Synagogues, camps, youth groups and Jewish schools regularly use Craig's music in their respective institutions across the country. With over 30 Jewish recordings his music has become an integral part of the Jewish community, weaving song and spirit into the fabric of Jewish life.

Craig enjoys a successful career in television and film, composing music TV series from Fox, HBO, PBS and Showtime and in films from such respected studios as Paramount Pictures, New Line Cinema and Disney. Craig's songs have been recorded by such respected artists as Chita Rivera, Whoopi Goldberg and Jennifer Holliday and his sell-out concerts draw thousands of fans at such respected venues as Ravinia in Chicago, Westbury Music Fair in New York, The Greek Theater in Los Angeles and at three special performances at the White House.