

Melodies, Memories, and Change

High Holiday Music from JTS Cantorial Students

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At their best, familiar melodies on the High Holidays serve as a time machine, transporting us to our earliest memories of sitting beside our parents in synagogue or causing us to flash forward to a later life stage, imagining what it might be like to attend services with our own grandchildren. We can feel a sense of profound welcome when we enter an unfamiliar prayer space or encounter a different cantor and still hear our most beloved tunes, enabling us to sing along immediately and effortlessly. Transition and uncertainty are a given, and familiar melodies offer us comfort, stability, and a sense of belonging. New melodies, at their best, are refreshing and breathe new life into familiar words. Yet, new tunes might also feel jarring, robbing us of nostalgia and community, especially in overwhelming times.

Cantors are particularly concerned with this tension during the High Holidays as we balance traditional melodies with new ones. At one extreme, changing the tune for *Kol Nidre* or *Avinu Malkeinu* would certainly be unwise. Furthermore, it is far easier to sing along with familiar melodies. Creating favorable circumstances for engagement and communal participation benefits us all.

However, introducing new melodies in a sensitive way has the potential to enliven different generations within our communities. Using new or unexpected tunes strategically and thoughtfully can deepen spiritual reflection, causing us to experience a prayer in a new way and offering us new insights into our liturgy. New tunes keep our prayer lives vibrant and reflect our living tradition, especially when we expand our services to include melodies from different communities and cultures. Additionally, some of today's new melodies will surely become our next generation's standard tunes.

At JTS, our cantorial students learn how to facilitate communal singing in a way that is engaging and uplifting, whether the melodies are new or old. It is my pleasure to share this musical compilation featuring four seasoned cantorial students leading our JTS community in melodies for the High Holidays: Kelsey Bailey, Toby Banks, Ruth Engel and Brittany Stern. These clips are taken from the students' *Nusah* presentations, all of which are available on JTS's Youtube channel.

Please scan the QR code below to hear *Ve-ye'etayu*, a beloved liturgical poem (*piyyut*) from the *Musaf* service as well as selections from the *Ne'ilah* service at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, including *El Nora Alilah*, a Sephardic and Mizrahi *piyyut* that has been adopted by many Ashkenazic communities. And, of course, *Avinu Malkeinu*. Please sing along!

LISTEN

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www.jtsa.edu/melodies-memories-and-change

